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# In Viking Land

or

A Summer Tour  
in Norway



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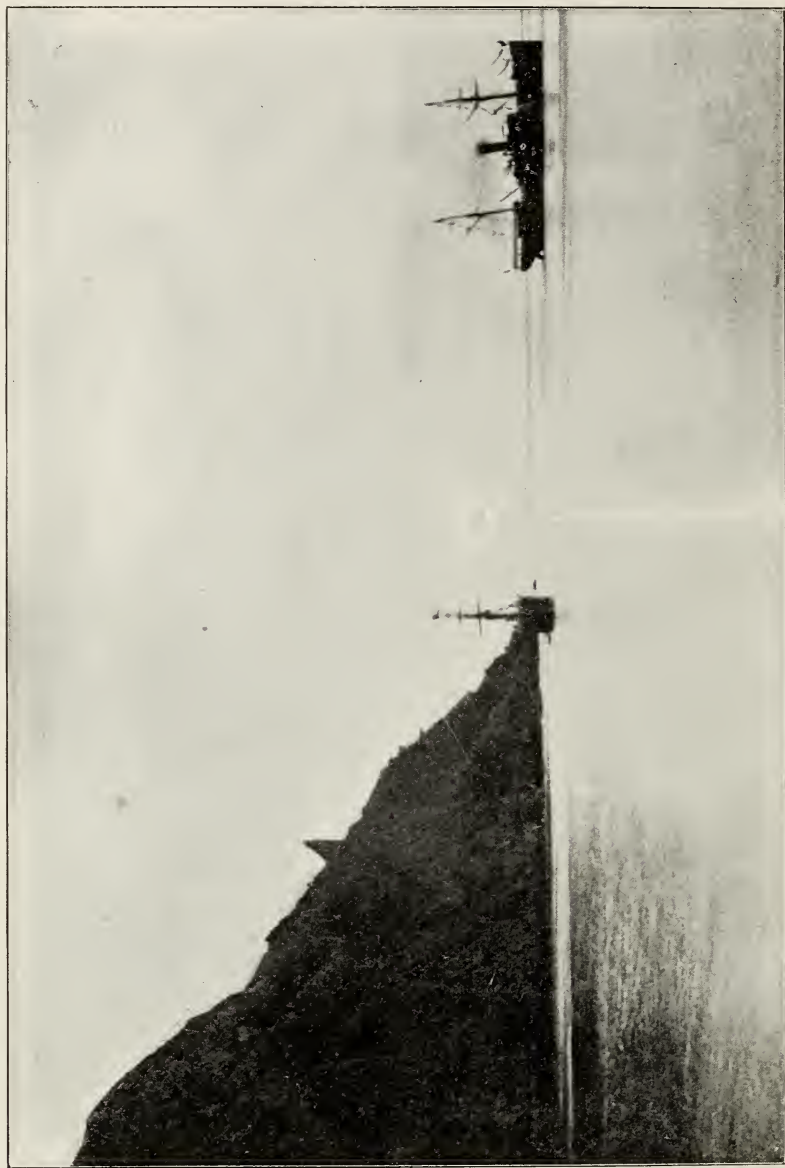






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NORTH CAPE—MIDNIGHT SUN.

IN VIKING LAND  
OR  
A SUMMER TOUR IN NORWAY

BY

JOHANNA WEBORG.

ILLUSTRATED BY

VIDA WEBORG.

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"Only far in Northland  
Spite of darkness' band,  
Doth the light of summer  
Gain supreme command.  
There rosy dawning and even-glow  
Walk hand in hand."

↓

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1901.

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## PREFACE.

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While in Norway, I kept a diary for my own amusement and future reference, but had no intention of writing for publication. It is only at the request of many friends that I tender them this little volume, knowing that I have not done my subject justice, but trusting that it will convey to them some of the pleasure that is experienced in so full a measure by every lover of nature who visits Norseland.

A description of the unusual in nature—her freaks and seeming phenomena—is apt to be discredited more or less by the untraveled, and this country has many singularities. Facts pertaining to it, though scrupulously stated, have often been confounded with fables. I have therefore endeavored to give a simple recital of our experiences and a description of the country as seen through American spectacles, carefully avoiding exaggeration.

Authorities on Norway, as Anderson, Boyeson and Randers, have been consulted, and doubtful impressions have been verified or corrected through correspondence.

If, above this, it should appear to the reader that any of the pictures in the following pages are overdrawn, I would advise: Go and see.

J. W,

Fish Creek, Wis



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# IN VIKING LAND;

OR,

A SUMMER TOUR IN NORWAY.

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## CHAPTER I.

---

### DREAMS REALIZED.

On the deck of the fine little English steamer Eldorado, we sit, Vida and I, and, as evening approaches, begin to scan the horizon eastward to catch the first glimpse of Norway's coast. I have determined not to go below; I do not wish to sleep now that the goal is so near; my feelings are too intensely awake, and to this moment I have looked forward for years.

Though an American, Norway is the home of my fathers; and, years ago, I learned to love it, through saga-tale and fable, and through mother's oft repeated stories of her childhood and youth in "the old land." Its mythology and folklore always possessed a charm for me, and I could early distinguish between the mountain elves, the sea-nymphs, and the many other mysterious inhabitants of ocean and hill.

It was mother's home; and, somehow, she never was Americanized, this mother of mine; her heart would never be weaned from the surf-washed cliffs and purple heather-hills of her native coast. It has been the dream of my life to visit

those scenes which she could speak of for hours, a far-off look in her eyes. Now, ten years after we laid her to rest in a little forest-circled graveyard, I am almost at the goal. Imagine then with what eagerness after long anticipation I gaze eastward.

When we boarded our steamer at Hull last evening it was not without some misgivings, as we noted its small size and remembered what had been told us about the rough and treacherous North Sea; but we were pleasantly surprised when, going on deck in the morning, we found a sea as smooth and harmless as Lake Michigan on a calm day. The Grimsby fishing fleet, comprising scores of fishing smacks with red-tanned sails, made an effective picture on its blue surface.

It is now ten o'clock in the afternoon, but, as it is still light, we do not realize the hour, nor the fact that we are speeding away from night, leaving it behind us as we draw near to the Land of the Midnight Sun. The looked-for coast is not far away, we are told, but a mist hides it from view. As we near Jeddereen—(The Selvage), an unbroken part of the southwest coast,—we take a more northerly course, when our steamer, lying in the trough of the great shore swells, rolls so violently that the physical threatens to overpower the spiritual; and though fish-boats with “Stavanger” in bold letters on their sails are joyfully hailed as they rock by us, we retire to our cabin.

At midnight my dreams are realized. I must have slept, but wake when the swinging motion of the boat has ceased, proving that we are in calm water. Rushing on deck, I find that we are gliding through numberless rocky islets into the harbor of Stavanger.

This is Norway—a coast so unique that apperception had failed to picture it! The small mountain peaks that rise from the sea on all sides of us seem to be in dangerous proximity to our steamer; but we are piloted skillfully between them and soon lie at the wharf. Midnight, but no darkness, only a clear twilight! No lights are needed in the streets of the city; and with a feeling of exultation which cannot be expressed, I set my foot on Norwegian soil, walk to a hotel near by, and send a telegram to Bergen.

In the morning we are on deck betimes, regretting that such commonplace affairs as breakfast and packing of baggage must call our attention for a time from the passing scenery. As we follow the coast northward, we sail within a continuous breakwater of islands, thousands of them—some mere rocks, scarred and furrowed, washed clean by centuries of ocean waves—others, high, precipitous cliffs, green with heather and small shrubs.

Stoddard writes of them:

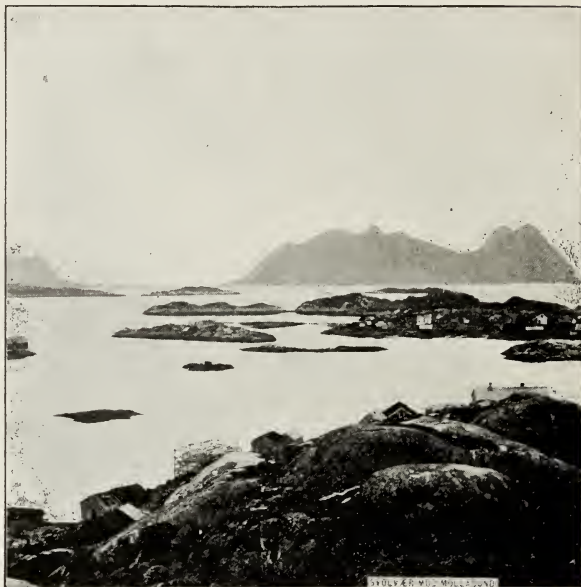
“The number and proximity of these islands astonished me. For hour after hour they would come into sight, wheel slowly by us and disappear, to be succeeded by their counterparts. We saw them glittering in the sunset ere we went to sleep, and in the morning we were once more environed by them. Sometimes I could fancy that they were sailing with us, like a vast convoy of protecting gunboats, moving when we moved, halting when we halted, patient and motionless till we resumed our journey.”

As we near Bergen, the ocean avenue through which we sail grows narrower, and the hills on either side of us rise to greater heights. Beyond these, to eastward, snow-capped

mountains appear. Words cannot picture this scenery. Readier pens than mine have sought to do so and owned their failure, so it seems presumptuous in me to undertake it.

Waterfalls and rivulets in many varied combinations come down from the summits of the evergreen hills and pour into the sea a stone's-throw from our steamer. The ocean is calm and clear as crystal, reflecting hill and stream and heather in an exquisite blending of color

Now there is no channel to be seen ahead, and we are sailing directly onto the rocks! But no; here we turn a rocky promontory, and a typical fishing village comes into sight. One might well exclaim: How can these people make a living here!



NORSE COAST.

There are, to be sure, small patches of green in the hollows among the rocks—potato patches they prove to be, containing only a few square yards. The prospects for gardening are not very encouraging owing to the scarcity of soil; but, with close economy these hardy coast-dwellers gain a livelihood from the ocean just beyond. A hard and hazar-

dous life it is often, for the fickle Old Ocean, lately so generous, now withholds its gifts or in impassioned fury hurls the empty, overturned fisher-boats back upon the shore.

But what other country can boast of a coast like this? We can understand somewhat the feelings of the Norwegian who, from the monotonous prairies of Dakota, looks back with longing to his homeland as he sings:

“Hvor herligt er mit faedreland,  
Det hav-omkranste Gamle Norge!  
Sku disse stolte klippe borge  
Som evigt trodse Tidens tand!”

“How glorious is my fatherland  
The ocean-girded olden Norway!  
Her strong and rocky fortress walls  
Withstand the tooth of time for aye!”

We are reminded of these lines as we note the lofty islands, each composed of one massive rock, gray and ancient, in places grooved as though the “tooth of time” in spiteful but defeated rage had sought to gnaw it away. Through an endless succession of these curious islands we wind our way into Bergen.

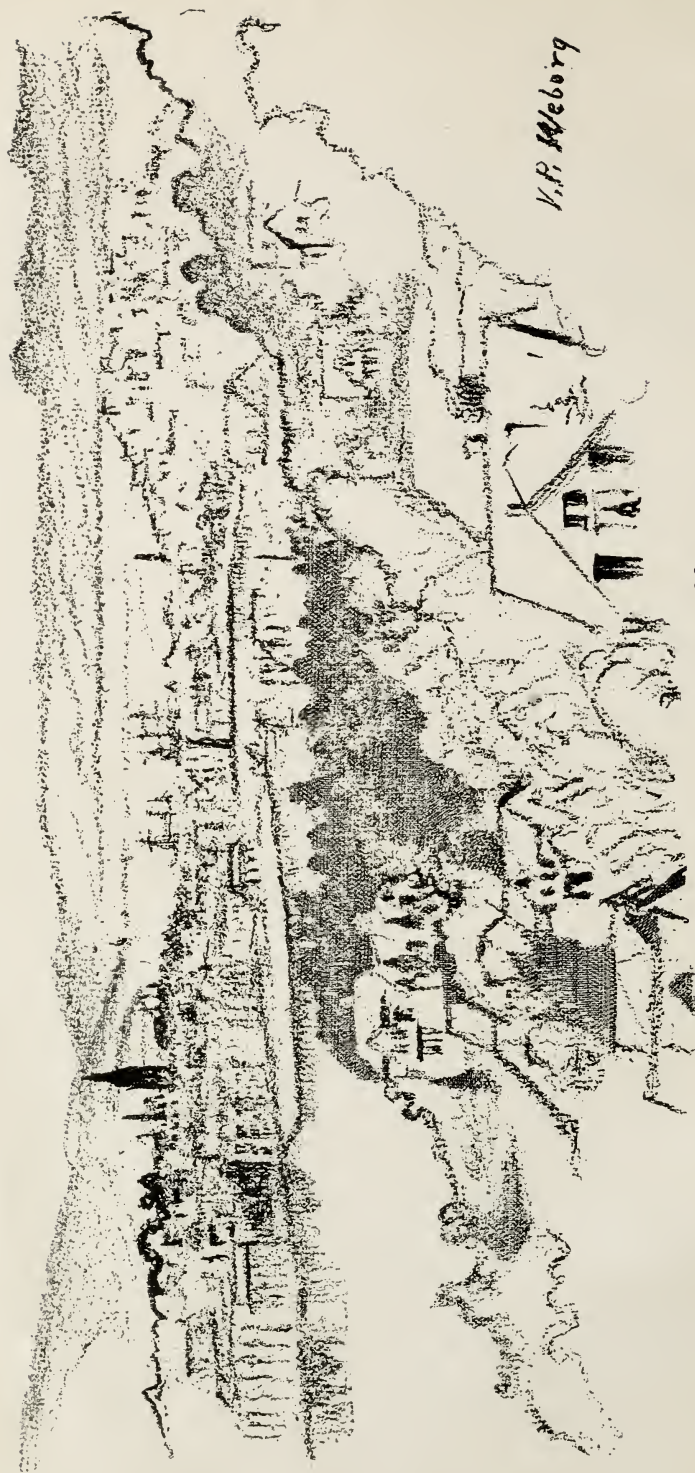
As we sail up the harbor, a sudden shower of rain sends us under roof for a few minutes, then the sun bursts forth, and the gray tiled roofs of the queer old city shine like silver—a beautiful sight.

On the wharf is a crowd of men and boys who gaze up at us, smiling, bowing, and tipping their hats. We are not accustomed to being thus greeted by strangers. What may this homage, so unrepugnant, mean? Any feeling of exaltation is, however, soon dispelled when we learn that each of the polite strangers hopes to be allowed to carry

our baggage, or to conduct us to the hotel which he represents. Their hopes are presently disappointed; for a pleasant-faced gentleman makes his way through the crowd, steps on deck, and, with a hearty hand-clasp, bids us "Velkommen til Norge!" We know that kindly face and do not feel that we are strangers though in a strange land.

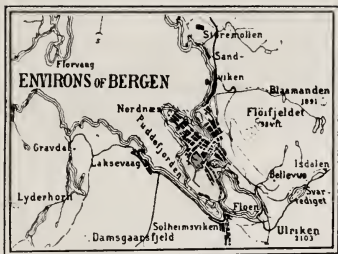






V. P. Helsingborg

Bergen from Bellevue.



## CHAPTER II.

### BERGEN.

"Twelve o'clock and all's well!

"God bless our good city of Bergen!"

This was the cry of the watchman centuries ago as he paced slowly to and fro, calling the hours in loud and sonorous tones through the twilight nights of summer and the long, aurora-lit nights of winter. The watchman's cry has not been heard for the past thirty years, but a silent guard may be seen at his post on the wall of an old fort which crowns a promontory separating two harbors. This ruin, could it speak, would tell of many a stirring event; for Bergen was founded in the year 1070, and is one of the oldest cities in Norway, rich in historical lore and Viking tale. Now soft green turf sprinkled with wild flowers has long covered the walls of this fort, undisturbed save by the passing foot of some sauntering visitor or the occasional sickle of the mower. A few famous old cannon lie on the grass, resting on their laurels. Their day is done, for on the opposite side of the harbor, a new fort with modern guns commands the bay.

Near this fort stands Haakon's Hall, one of the city's most treasured relics. The palace was built in 1247-61, and

has lately been redeemed from decay, the work of restoration having progressed for thirty years. Its massive walls, which once echoed to the laughter and festive songs of King Haakon's court, are decorated with rare carvings in stone, faithfully reproduced where the original had crumbled. Crudely wrought figures of animals and men give an imposing majesty to the immense, dimly-lighted hall. Its many secret stairways and corridors bear witness to the feuds and treacherous warfare of the Middle Ages.

Bergen is beautifully situated on its fjord, which latter is divided by peninsulas into several good harbors. The main parts of the city are closely built next to the water's edge. Here the buildings are mostly of wood, picturesquely roofed with red tiles or silvery Shifferstone. In newer parts are scattered handsome residences which climb granite slopes where velvety grass peeps out from each crevice and hollow. This, together with trees and shrubs springing from every available cranny, makes a fine setting for the old gray rock.

In the distance, on all sides, rise the guardian hills. Fløifjeldet approaches nearer than the rest, lifting its head proudly and protectingly over the city. From a tall flag-pole on its summit waves the tri-colored flag of Norway; and near this the Fløi restaurant stands up against the sky.

Never shall I forget my first evening in Bergen. From a rocky seat near the old fort, I obtain a view of the greater part of the town. Below me, on three sides, lies the quiet fjord. The most brilliant of sunsets is reflected on hill and fjord and city, in the richest coloring. Never before, not even on canvas, have I seen hills of such royal purple, rose and violet; and the whole of the broad bay to the foot

of the cliff is a shimmering sea of lilac, gold and crimson. Even the buildings in the distance are exquisitely tinted, as though built of precious stones—ruby, gold and amethyst. I can only compare it all to the vision described by the apostle on the Isle of Patmos.

It is half past ten and the sun has just sunk below the hill-tops. It has not yet reached the horizon. At eleven I am writing a letter to my home by the light of this unresting sun. The letter is finished, but it is still broad daylight, and it seems ridiculous to go to my hotel and to sleep. Groups of promenaders pass me, laughing and chatting.

Taking an electric car to the foot of Fløyen, and then walking up the winding carriage-drive which leads to its summit, we reach the restaurant, Bellevue. Farther on up the drive we stop to rest on some seats set on the verge of the cliff, and find the huddled, red-roofed city nearly below us.

Though the sunset view of the city was glorious beyond measure, the sombre, midnight view of it, and from such an eminence, can almost be described as dreadful. The red-tiled roofs, one seeming to meet another, stretch out from the bases of dark-heathered mountains to the margin of the irregular fjord. A great stretch of red has a peculiar effect on the feelings of one unaccustomed to anything but the usual olive-gray of nature; and, seen in the sullen after-glow and the solemn hush of a midsummer's night, it occurred to me that the dethroned and offended gods of the Norsemen have collected their fury in this retired hollow and are holding it until occasion shall rise for it to be again loosened to wreak vengeance on the land.



Here and there from the hill-tops bonfires shoot up, for this is St. John's Eve and it is a time-honored custom to celebrate it so. The boys build these fires, carrying the fuel up from the valley, often with infinite labor, each group vying with the others to have the highest and brightest blaze. Their attempts are almost laughable, for the absence of darkness leaves the bonfires scarcely more than pillars of smoke.

This, then, was the home of Ole Bull, the great violinist—his Bergen of which he was so proud! His bow drank its inspiration from scenes such as these. Music could best describe them—words are too feeble. He traveled far in distant lands, applauded by the world, but his heart remained with his city always and drew his steps back again. He was the friend of Longfellow who paid to his genius this beautiful tribute:

Last, the musician as he stood,  
Illumined by that fire of wood,  
Fair-haired, blue-eyed, his aspect blithe,  
His figure tall and straight and lithe,  
And every feature of his face  
Revealing his Norwegian race;  
A radiance streaming from within  
Around his eyes and forehead beamed,  
The angel with the violin,  
Painted by Raphael, he seemed.  
And when he played, the atmosphere  
Was filled with magic, and the ear  
Caught echoes of that Harp of Gold,  
Whose music had so weird a sound,  
The hunted stag forgot to bound,  
The leaping rivulet backward rolled,  
The birds came down from bush and tree,  
The dead came from beneath the sea,  
The maiden to the harper's knee."

\* \* \* \* \*

Though he called himself "America's adopted son," he built his ideal home out there on the island of Lysö, eighteen miles from the city. There he collected his curiosities from foreign lands, planted his flowers, and paved his



STATUE OF OLE BULL AT BERGEN.

garden-walks with ocean shells. To Lysö he returned in 1880, to die. He rests on the hillside at the foot of Flöien where he played his violin when a child. His grave is a simple green mound, where a flowering vine trails its wreaths over the illustrious dead.

At length we tear ourselves away from the enchanting scene around us and return to our hotel, but not to sleep, for the pale green shades at our windows do not exclude the

light, nor can we shut out the merry laughter of the children in the street. Not till the small hours of the morning is there a hush over the city.



When do these people sleep, I wonder? Do they make up for their summer wakefulness during the long, Arctic winter? We learn that it is a national custom, and one with which we soon fall in line, to sleep for an hour or two after dinner.

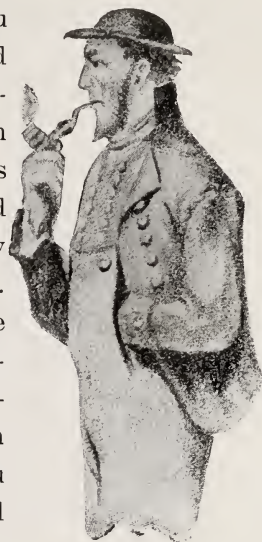
Bergen is an exceptionally clean city, its narrow, sloping streets, all stone paved and shining white. Dust has little chance to accumulate here, for the town is blessed with frequent and copious showers. Indeed, it is said that there is only one city in the world (and that is in the tropics) that has more rain than Bergen. Woe to the ignorant visitor who presumes to come here without his umbrella and galoshes! As you climb the steps of a sloping street in a rain, you are met by many little cascades which pour over your feet and ankles. Rivers of water flow along the grooves on either side, and shower-baths may be had, gratis, by simply taking your stand under the eaves. It is said that the citizens are born here with umbrellas and many are the "rainy jokes" perpetrated at the expense of the Bergenser.

A walk through the Strandgaden, the principal business street, is interesting. It is old and very narrow, its sidewalks allowing but two to walk abreast with comfort; hence, a policeman marches up and down to see that all take the walk at the right to avoid collisions. Many fine shops line this old street.

Another part of the city which attracts much attention is Tydskebyggen. This group of buildings dates back to the twelfth century and was built by enterprising Germans who, it seems, had a monopoly of the fish trade here at that early date. Its grotesque looking houses are now in a

crumbling condition, and will be soon torn down, though doubtless a few of them will be preserved as curiosities.

Then there is the far-famed fish market, where live fish are offered for sale every day except Sunday. Scores of fish-boats, manned by the "Stril," or his sturdy wife, line the wharves. You would be amused to hear the sharp and witty contentions between these fish-mongers and the undaunted kitchen maids as they wrangle over the prices of the wares. Large water-vats stand on the wharf, and in these a variety of fish swim about slowly and hopelessly. The dense crowd always gathered here in the morning shows how well this article of food is appreciated by the Norsemen. A certain hotel in the city which seems to advertise fish, will give you your choice of no less than five species all placed before you at a meal. A delicious fish odor penetrates every apartment of the building. However, this is not a typical hotel; but certain it is that Bergen is the ideal place for the lover of the finny tribe.



"A STRIL."

Ah, the tempting cod! the halibut! the plaice! with a dozen other species, not to speak of the choice salmon buttered, "which but an hour ago, blushed"—swam about, ignorant of its "own loveliness!" We had often heard father expound on the excellencies of the Norwegian herring, but always smiled incredulously at his raptures. Now we have

proved its fine flavor, and do not wonder that English tourists here order fried fresh herring and potatoes for breakfast, much to the amusement of the citizens whose breakfasts are always light meals.

In spite of its aqueous fame, this city has been honored as the proper site for the great international exposition which is now being held. It has drawn hither peasantry and gentry from all parts of the country; and the various peasant costumes, especially the odd head dresses, interest us more than the fair itself, though that is finer than anything we had expected to see in Norway. Many exhibits of homespun, needle-work and wood-carving are truly beautiful. The grand aquarium with its many living curiosities, could be nowhere better supplied than here, and we remember that the Norwegian fish exhibit took the lead in the World's Fair at Chicago. And here we recognize some of the identical Turkish bazaars which graced the famous "Midway Plaisance." The Norse girls who stand behind the counters make as pretty Turkish maidens as did our American girls of '93.

Yes, the exhibition certainly does credit to Norway, and gives evidence of much modern improvement and progress. Exhibits from the United States and some European countries, add to its attractions. The entrance fee is so small that the poorest can avail themselves of the fair if they do not live too far away; so hundreds who have never before been away from their native parishes gaze with wide-eyed wonder at its splendors. One honest soul, a Hardanger yoeman, expressed himself thus:

"When I came within the exposition gates I was struck dumb with amazement and could not move, but stood still

for half an hour. When a greenhorn like me, who has never been anywhere or seen anything, comes suddenly upon such splendor, it dazzles him, you see."

One morning we received an invitation from the friend who had first met us on our arrival, to dine at his house. His wife had returned from her summer resort to receive us. We found her a pleasant, sociable lady, richly attired in a stylish black dress. The handsomely furnished rooms contained many fancy articles worked by her fingers and arranged with artistic taste.

Dinner was served in three courses, followed, in one hour, by cakes and very strong coffee to be sipped from tiny Turkish cups. In the evening our friends suggested a visit to Bellevue, from which place they pointed out many objects of interest. Some days later we had the pleasure of meeting our new-found friend again, at her summer resort, where she had invited us to spend the day.

The little steam-yacht, *Ole Bull*, landed us on the island of Ask, a perfect elysium lying near the entrance to Bergen fjord. Our hostess stood on the landing to welcome us. She led us up a hill through the woods to where a little villa stood in a grassy field. Peasant men and women, aided by a generous Bergen student, were working with might and main to get the hay raked and under cover before the threatened rain should fall. Near by was a hill with grassy ledges overhanging a pretty little fresh-water lake with a pebbly beach. There seemed to be nearly every variety of scenery in miniature on this island.

We were entertained right royally, and after dinner tucked away on couch and reclining chair with directions to

take a quiet nap. We made an honest, if unsuccessful attempt to please the good lady. The day passed pleasantly, and towards evening our friend walked with us in the rain to the landing. She chatted merrily as we sat on the carpet of clean, dry needles under the sheltering pine-trees to wait for the boat. Soon we were joined by a group of breathless school-ma'ams without rubbers (plainly not citizens of Bergen), who snuggled under the pines and made merry remarks about the primitive condition of things on the Isle of Ask. When we bade our kind friend farewell we little dreamed what a long farewell it was to be. We learned, not long after, that she had passed away from the ever-changing, unsatisfying scenes of earth, and out into the great Beyond. Ours was only a summer day acquaintance, short, though pleasant.

We trust that—

“We shall know each other better,  
In the dawning of the morning,  
When the mists have cleared away.”







A HARDANGER WOMAN.



## CHAPTER III.

---

### PEASANT LIFE IN HARDANGER.

We have been in Hardanger! Ostensö, Hardanger! It is an obscure little place—one of earth's cozy, sunny corners, where peace and contentment reign supreme.

The Hardanger fjord is one of the largest of the many arms of the ocean that penetrate the mountains of Norway for hundreds of miles in narrow, winding passages. These drowned valleys are walled by cliffs, rising in some places to the height of five or six thousand feet. One might think that such fjords would be dangerous to navigate, owing to hidden rocks; but, on the contrary, they are perfectly safe, though scarcely more than three or four rods wide in places. Very irregular in outline, in other parts they measure several miles in width. They are everywhere of a great depth. What frightful gorges they must have been ere they sank and were flooded by the sea, way back in the early ages when the world was new!

This voyage up the Hardanger fjord was the very perfection of ocean travel. For hours after leaving Bergen, the handsome little fjord-steamer, Voringen, kept winding in and out among every division of land and water named in elementary geography. I only remember fleeting pictures of green woods, grass-grown rocks, waterfalls, small houses,

large hotels, wharves fastened with bolts to the cliff, "milords" in bicycle suits or with fishing tackle in hand, and crowds of ladies in shirt-waists and sailor-hats—all of which left a most pleasing impression of rest and enjoyment. As we sailed up the fjord, its walls rose to increasing heights, tinted with many colors. We passed so close at times that it seemed we could easily leap from the deck, across to the shelves of rock. The glassy water was peculiarly colored—a deep bluish green—a fine back-ground for the flocks of seagulls that continually followed our steamer, skimming the water in our wake, and flapping their snowy wings in saucy nearness to our heads. After nearly a day of this delightful sailing we reached Ostensö.

Picture, if you can, a small rural village, surrounded by peasant cottages in sunny green fields which cover the gently-rolling hills around it. The valley nestles between high, wooded hills, rising one above the other up to the snow-capped peaks in the back-ground. Before it, the widening fjord; and, towering above this, the Folgefond mountains, white with perpetual snow.

*Folgefond* signifies *Folk's Drift*. A legend states that, at one time, a village, large and prosperous, occupied the level plateau which lies on the summit of this mountain. One of its inhabitants, a young man, went into foreign lands in search of a fortune; but, after some years, turned back, heartsick and homesick, to his beloved village. What was his grief and consternation to find nothing but a snow-drift several hundred feet in depth, covering the entire mountain! All trace of the village had been lost, and not a soul remained to tell the story. The huge drift has never since

melted, but occasionally sends down in its streams, they say, a wooden dish, spoon or cradle-rocker, relics of the frozen, buried village.

The level Folgefond with its icy surface is traversed all summer by reindeer drawing sledges filled with merry pleasure-seekers. Imagine a ride like this in July, through the clear mountain air, the beautiful panorama of blue fjord and green hills and valleys below you!

My sister and I were objects of no small interest when it was discovered that we were "*fra America*," that wonderland concerning which they had heard strange tales. The



ROAD TO THE FOLGEFOND.

Norwegian, as a rule, has an extravagant respect for anything American—a belief that over here we revel in luxury. We were lodged in the only hotel which the place afforded, and word was sent to the embarrassed peasant families which it was our intention to visit, informing them of our arrival.

The following day was Sunday, bright and calm—the

very essence of rest and peace. Then it was that, seated on the hotel veranda, we viewed an exhibition more novel than anything that we had yet seen.

Scores of row-boats dotted the fjord, coming from the south, east and west. "What does this mean?" I inquired.

"Oh, our bishop will preach today, and the people are coming from neighboring parishes to church," was the explanation.

One by one, the boats touched the stony beach, and for an hour or more groups of men, women and children walked slowly past the hotel to the little church near by. The costumes of the women and little girls were nearly alike in style. The pretty Hardanger costume consists of a black, homespun skirt, a scarlet bodice, a stomacher covered with gaudy beadwork, full, white sleeves and bosom, white apron and beaded belt. The head-dress of the girls is a woolen, linen or silk kerchief with corners tied under the chin. Married women wear a square of white linen, starched and fluted, and so arranged as to stand out in a hornlike point on either side of the head. There must have been more than a hundred of these queer *skaut*, as they are called, glistening like small snow-drifts in the crowd gathered about the church.

Dame Fashion is powerless here, for the pretty girl of eighteen wears today her mother's wedding dress, made twenty-five years ago! The skirt must always be black or very dark blue.

"Why do you not, for variety's sake, have some of your homespun dyed a pretty blue, green or brown?" I asked.

"Oh, we'd never dare to wear it!" was the reply. "If we tried to depart from an old, established fashion, in that

way, we should be ridiculed by all our neighbors as presuming to think ourselves better than they."

For two short, glorious hours, when she has reached the pinnacle of her earthly fame and ambition, the Hardanger girl wears a scarlet skirt, trimmed with bands of gold or silver braid. This is when she stands before the altar, a bride, crowned with a magnificent gold and silver crown, from which many shining bangles fall over her brow and braided hair. After the ceremony she returns to her father's house, where the pretty scarlet skirt is exchanged for a black one—the wedding dress proper. The heavy crown must be endured for some hours longer. Then there is a lull in the festivities, as all gather about the blushing bride to witness the most interesting of ceremonies. The supreme moment has arrived when she is to receive the honored badge of wifehood. Her emotion is visible when two women remove her

crown and replace it by the picturesque *skaut*, which is to be her headdress henceforth, until she lays it aside forever, hoping for another—an imperishable crown.

The little girls looked like miniature women, with their



THREE VERY SMALL GIRLS.

long black skirts, short waists and kerchiefs on heads. Three very small girls, after curtseying respectfully, arranged



themselves in a row near the veranda, and stared at us for half an hour, silent and motionless. It is needless to say that we returned the gaze.

After dinner we were presented to a peasant woman with an intelligent face and dark eyes under the snowy *skaut*. She timidly invited us to her cottage, saying: "Everything is poor and simple in my house, but if you will be satisfied you shall be welcome." We were delighted. Her timidity soon vanished, and, in this and a neighboring cottage, we spent eight happy days.

In this valley was such a combination of the sunny and beautiful, the wild and majestic as I had never before seen. Somewhere up there were waterfalls; we could hear their roar; and one of the mountain streams came singing with many cascades within a few feet of our door, its banks gorgeous with wild flowers—old friends of ours—the daisy and buttercup of America, the bluebell of Scotland, the wild rose and sweet-scented violet of England. Nestling familiarly close to these were many others strange to us. Such a profusion of wild flowers in field and wood! There were great stretches of blue in the hayfields where the bluebells were crowded so closely together as to literally conceal the green.

The peasants were making hay, hanging it up to dry on racks like short fences built of poles. These, when bare, resemble mammoth worms with many straddling legs stalking through the field; but, loaded with the soft green hay, they are extremely picturesque, and how fragrant the breezes blowing between them!

We were pleased to find in Ostensö, peasant-life, primitive and simple, unspoiled by imported customs or dress.

The houses, with few exceptions, are built of hewn pine timber, the walls unpainted and unplastered, the wide windows curtainless. The scanty furniture is mostly homemade, the beds narrow, short and bin-like. My bed, in one instance, had a shelf fourteen inches in width placed across it at the foot. It puzzled me at first to know why it was there. The mystery was soon solved: It is an old national custom to treat guests to coffee before they arise in the morning, and this shelf was designed to serve as a table. The custom is now nearly obsolete, and the coffee did not appear.

Stoves, very primitive looking indeed, are coming into use in the country. Their parlor heaters are startling affairs. We had a hearty laugh at the first one we saw in Bergen. It was a rectangular monument of iron, reaching nearly to the ceiling, and containing a number of shelves to which doors opened one above the other. The foundation was an unpretentious little box-stove, its four legs braced as though using their utmost efforts to hold aloft this mass of iron on its back. Where the floor beneath it is not exactly level you are reminded of the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

Fireplaces are in common use, and on these is prepared the simple food, consisting principally of rye or oatmeal mush, milk, fish, meat, potatoes, cheese and the renowned Hardanger-cake and *flat-brod*. This *flat-brod* (rightly so named for two reasons), is the national "staff-of-life;" and, if you contemplate a visit to Norway it will be well to have some previous conception of this article of food, lest the first shock should unnerve you. It resembles gray paper, is nearly as thin, hard and crisp, and baked on top of a stone oven in irregular sheets about two feet in diameter. It con-

sists of nothing but rye or oat meal and water, and is therefore tasteless. When made of coarse, home-ground oatmeal it is unpalatable to foreigners. That made of fine rye flour is better; but we can sympathize deeply with the travelers who, in one of their mountain rambles, called at a cottage to procure a lunch. Milk they obtained, and *flat-brod* in abundance, but could get no other kind of bread. They munched away at it for an hour, and then were so hungry that they were obliged to turn about and make for their hotel!

The best that the little market afforded was placed before us—good wheat and rye bread, besides shining bretzels which remind you of smooth, yellow, silken rope tied into little bows. These are excellent. They are bought by the piece, and conveniently carried by a cord on which they are strung by one of the loops of the bow. A diminutive market woman of about six years made an interesting picture as she marched by our window, the string of bretzels which hung from her finger just escaping the ground.

Our table was also supplied with fresh butter, cream, eggs, and, last but not least, a delicious goat's-milk cheese.

Next to fish, it seems that Norway has a monopoly of cheese. You will find it of various colors--white, yellow, pink, brown, and some even tinged with green and blue. Many varieties have a fine flavor, and then there is such an abundance! It is not unusual to find three whole cheeses of different kinds at a meal. Of course, they are not all eaten, but decorate the table for a month or more. The goat's-milk cheese, which is a block weighing four or five pounds, is dressed in a white doily, fringed and embroidered. This is



pinned around it to prevent fingers from touching it as it is passed around, each person shaving from the top of the block thin slices to spread on his bread and butter. Another variety which makes a pretty table-ornament is a yellow cheese, shaped like a big turnip, the surface stained a bright turnip red. Then there is the *gammel-ost* which demands notice, for it is old enough to speak for itself, with its burning flavor, strong odor and variegated coloring.

One afternoon our hostess carried some sheets of Hardanger cake (which is thicker than flat-brod and better) to the brook and dipped them into the water. She next laid them on the table, spread them with butter and goat's-milk cheese, rolled them up like scrolls and cut them into pieces six inches in length. She then bade us all sit down on the grass by the brook, spread a white cloth on the ground before us, and brought, forthwith, the scrolls just prepared and excellent coffee—a most savory repast.

As we ate and chatted our host remarked, pointing to a poor little house high up above the fjord: “Do you see that hut up there? Well, there lived my schoolmate, Nils Thorpe, a poor boy of such a stammering tongue that he was held for a fool. He had, however, one advantage over the rest of us boys. He had an indomitable will, and if he knew a thing he would set his teeth hard, clinch his fist, and stammer away till he had it out. We passed him in all our studies, but he succeeded at last in finishing the limited branches prescribed by law for peasant children, and shortly after sailed for Ameriea. There he entered a common school, went to college, and today is *Senator Thorpe* of Minnesota! There he is, wealthy, educated and respected; and here am I, at the foot of the ladder just where he left me.”

My pulse beat faster as I listened to this story. I could have shouted for *the free schools of free America and for her generous laws!* I realized, as never before, how grand is that great-hearted land which gives to the poor, ignorant peasant boy wandering to her shores an equal chance with her own more favored sons.

An obliging young "Ole" gave us long rides over the hills with a handsome little pony and a two-wheeled cart. The Norwegian pony is the most charming little animal that I have ever seen—finely formed, always sleek and fat, his mane cut short so that it forms a stiff brush standing up on his neck. He is usually of a buckskin color, with a black stripe down his back. Gentle, steady and strong, he is able to travel a surprising distance without showing fatigue.

Oh, those were pleasant rides through the clearest and most bracing of atmospheres, on winding, rock-built roads over the fjords, through birch woods with many warm, sheltered glades—fairy parks, carpeted with velvety grass and wild crimson clover—such a bright crimson! And there were flower beds, thickly planted and well cared for by the Great Gardener.

We noticed that the birches were gnarled and deformed in many places. Ole explained that the branches had been cut off year by year, to be used as fodder for cattle, thus giving the trees this stunted appearance.

In one of our drives we visited Norheimsund, a beautiful resort several miles to the southwest. There are the Bridal Veil falls, some of the finest though not the largest in Norway. As we approached them we saw a woman stooping under a load of fagots which she carried on her back. She

walked up a steep path and right into the center of the waterfall, where she disappeared. We climbed the same path and found that it led under the falls to a dry ledge, protected by a shelf above over which the water poured. As we stood there the misty, silver veil fell over, before and around us. Emerging on the other side we found a mossy platform worn by many feet, showing that this is a favorite picnic ground for tourists.

Nilda, the milkmaid, is Ole's sister, a fine, strapping lass. She has the sole care of the cattle, which are kept all summer on the mountains. Should we like a visit to the "*saeter*?" Nothing could please us better, and accordingly one afternoon we prepared to follow Nilda to her "green fields and pastures new." The "*saeter*" lay two miles up on the mountains and was reached by a narrow path—a rocky stairway through the woods. It was a hard climb. Vida, who had



A WILD NOOK.

traveled among the Rockies for the past two years, had the advantage of me; while to Nilda, who climbed that path every

day, it appeared as easy as walking a parlor floor. In places there were long, smooth, grassy slopes which invitingly suggested that the descent could be easily made by simply leaving all progress to the force of gravity and rolling down.

We found the "*saeter*" to be a queer little village of log huts with doors four feet square. Each hut contains two small rooms, one of which is the dairy, the other, sitting-room and bedroom combined. There were thirteen of these little houses, each occupied by a *saeter girl*, or milkmaid.

Soon the occupants began to arrive by different paths, emerging, one by one, into the open from among the rocks and bushes on every side. Some carried milk firkins strapped on their backs, and each carried an unfinished stocking, their needles flying incessantly as they walked. Knitting has become a mechanical process to Norse peasant women, and it is not considered as work. They are never seen walking without their knitting, except to and from church, when the hymn book takes its place.

It was a pretty sight, those young girls in native costumes, bareheaded, but with faces which any city belle might envy. The useless kerchiefs hung loosely on their shoulders; but neither sun nor wind appeared to have any effect on those pink and white, shell-like complexions. They sat on the rocks, each busily knitting, as they waited for the cows, calling encouragingly to them when they were seen leisurly winding their way down from the surrounding hills: "Come Bella! Is Bella coming! So fine Bella is!"

We heard the distant tinkle of their bells, as they filed over the bare hill-tops, appearing no larger than mice as they stood in relief against the sky. Like the ponies, the

cows here are small and very gentle. How they were petted and praised as they came one by one to be milked, while they ate their share of vegetables.

Feeling somewhat chilly, I leaned my arms on the back of a little cow with soft, white fur, consolingly warm. Though I kept my position for about ten minutes she did not offer to move away, but stood quietly chewing her cud, perfectly unconcerned.

Nilda placed on a stool before us a small wooden tub filled with sour milk and its coating of thick, yellow cream. She then produced some delicious pastry, misnamed "poor-man's-cakes," gave us each a silver spoon and directed us to eat, which we proceeded to do; but, as the tub was six inches deep and about four feet in circumference we did not empty it. The milk kept in these wooden tubs is sweet and pure. The tubs are carefully scalded and we noticed the utmost neatness about everything. •

"In a week or two," said Nilda, "I must drive the cows to another *saeter* farther up the mountain, twenty miles away. I shall be alone there for several weeks and make cheese only. There will not be a human being to speak to, and no sound but the lowing of the cows and the music of their bells. Afraid? No; I shall not be afraid, but I shall be rather lonesome."

While there Nilda can truly sing Ole Bull's favorite folk-song, "The Saeter Girl's Sunday"—a song of such touching sweetness and so peculiarly Norse that the words cannot be translated.

"Where ignorance is bliss,  
'Tis folly to be wise."

So we thought as we watched these contented girls. Nilda only has a vague longing for the larger sphere of life



in the great world outside of her little valley, and there were tears in her eyes when she said to me a few days later: "I should like to go to America; but I am the only girl mother has; she needs me; I cannot leave her." And the brave girl sat down again cheerfully to the never ceasing hum of the spinning-wheel, and the rattle of the clumsy loom; for Nilda comes down from the *sæter* when the morning milking is done, going back at four in the afternoon. The rest of the summer hours are spent at the wheels, which must always be kept going when outdoor work is not pressing, for most of the clothing and bedding is homespun.

One day as we were exploring the brook we came suddenly upon great quantities of white wool homespun in long strips, stretched upon the bushes and surrounded by woods. It proved that the fuller, whose house was at some distance, had hung it there to dry. As the goods were not guarded in any way, we thought it spoke well for the honesty of the people.

The universal rinsing tub is the brook. We were surprised and amused at first to find family washing hung upon the trees in the woods, or stretched upon the grass by the brook, apparently isolated from all human habitation and belonging to no one. Though often left for a week to bleach, never a garment is stolen.

Pleasant memories of that quiet week will always follow me.

Our friends gathered on the quay one bright Sunday afternoon to bid us good-by; and we sailed away farther up the fjord.

## CHAPTER IV.

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### THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE GRAVE.

"Yes, we love this land that riseth  
Stormbeat, from the sea.  
O'er its thousand homes it lifteth  
Pine-clad brow and free.  
Love it, love it, and remember  
Your old sire's hearth  
And the saga-night that sheddeth  
Dreams upon our earth.

This the land that Harald rescued  
With his giant band;  
This the land that Haakon shielded  
While brave Eivind sang.  
On this land hath Olaf painted  
With his blood, the cross;  
From its heights has Sverre spoken  
To defy Rome's boast."

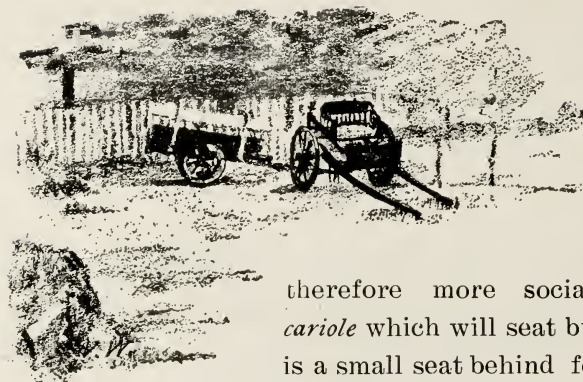
BJORNSON.

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On either side of us rose those majestic hills, striped all the way with waterfalls—ribbons of silver foam. Here and there, we passed the entrance to another fjord branching from this. In these sheltered coves the Vikings moored their ships and stored their plunder; and these walls resounded to their wild, exultant songs.

Reaching the village of Eide at six p. m., we at once engaged a *stol-kjaerre* to take us to Vossevangen, twenty-one miles away, from which place we intended to take the train





for Bergen. A *stol-kjaerre* is a two-wheeled cart with a seat to accommodate two, and

therefore more sociable than the *cariole* which will seat but one. There is a small seat behind for the driver.

A leather lap robe is fastened to the dashboard and hooks securely to each end of the seat, forming a good protection from rain and dust.

We had been advised to take this overland route to Bergen, and were assured that it possessed great natural beauty; but we were not prepared for what it revealed. Finer roads than those of Norway can be found nowhere in the world. They are made at the cost of great labor, through almost inaccessible broken ravines and up steep mountain sides, in many places cut out of the solid rock. They are paved with several layers of crushed rock, each finer than the last. The top layer is covered with clay which packs and cements the rock fragments together. A thin layer of fine gravel and sand covers this, and the result is a pavement, firm and smooth. Even where they climb steep hill-sides the grading is everywhere the same—a gentle incline which renders travel easy. In high places the roads have curb-stones consisting of huge blocks of rock placed five feet apart, giving an ornamental effect.

For the cyclist, Norway is a paradise.

Our road up the valley followed the windings of a river whose waters have a yellow tint. In places it widens out into lakes, the most remarkable one being *Gravens Vand*, which means Water of the Grave. It received this sepulchral name from the dark color of its water, and the frowning mountain walls which surround and hang over it like a pall. The lake is of a great depth, and this, with the reflection of the sombre rocks and the black soil on its margin, gives it this inky appearance.

One would think that here, surely, are no inhabitants. But yes; for, crouching under the cliff, is a small hamlet called The Grave—a church, post-office and less than a dozen houses. Is the world so small that people must have their letters addressed to the grave? We shuddered at the thought of living here, especially through the long, northern winter when scarcely a ray of sunshine can find its way into that dismal gorge.

Is it strange that the Norsemen have been a superstitious people? As we drove on and the valley grew narrower, the walls higher, we thought it a fit dwelling-place



ROADWAY IN THE VALLEY OF THE GRAVE.

for the Troll, Huldra, Nissen and all the other goblins. They could find numerous hiding-places in these broken walls, damp with numberless, thread-like falls that hang from their summits. It would require no great stretch of the imagination to people these gloomy caverns with unearthly beings—to hear, in the echoing moan of the wind and the murmur of falling water, the voices of “underground-people,” as they were called.

“Till heaven and earth shall pass away,  
These giant walls and buttricks gray,  
Secure from the full eye of day,  
Shall hold their olden mystery.”

But Norway’s long, weird “saga night” with its enchanting dreams is rapidly melting away before the onward march of civilization and truth; and only rarely is found that superstition which was common during mother’s childhood. Treasured and highly appreciated to be sure, are all the old myths and fables. They are repeated at every fireside; the children study them at school; while the daring deeds of the Vikings are told in many a song and story.

The awful solemnity of this dark canon cannot be described. Scarcely a spear of grass or vegetation of any kind grows beside the stream whose yellow waters moan unceasingly between the black rocks. There must have been more than a hundred waterfalls creeping snake-like down the massive walls—many of them lost in mid-air, dissolving into a cloud of mist. To add to the gloom of the place, our driver seemed to be in keeping with the surroundings. He was a silent man, and his face wore a forbidding frown.

“Is this where the goblins dwell?” I ventured with a smile.

"Yes," came the funereal reply; and he answered all our attempts at conversation with such chilling monosyllables that we soon forebore asking any questions, but conversed in English when we spoke at all. Silence was more fitting.

Hours passed thus; but a pleasant surprise was in store for us. As we turned around a cliff, there burst into view a



SCHERVEFOSSSEN, UPPER LEAP.

magnificent cataract, Schervefossen, a bridge spanning it midway. When crossing this bridge, the greater leap of the falls was above us, the smaller and foaming rapids below. The spray drove over us, but we could have remained there for an hour feasting our eyes on it. Our heartless driver went right on, however, and now our road led directly

to the solid mountain wall where it disappeared. Would a magic door open to us as to the "Piper of Hamlin," and was our ride to have a tragic termination? But when we came to the cliff-wall there was an abrupt curve, and the road led back with an ascent for some distance, then another turn and back again to the cliff. This was repeated till the road



over which we had passed lay in three long loops below us. Each successive turn having given us a fine view of the falls, we were now at their head.

The symbolic Valley of the Grave lay below and behind us, while, as though speaking of resurrection glory, fair green forests lay just before. Again and again have I in retrospection traversed "Graven's Dal;" and it always retains the same weird fascination which left its indelible impression that July night.

We climbed higher, through miles of pine forests and passed many little saw-mills turned by the rushing river. Soon snow-capped peaks rose up before us; the night grew chilly, and we were nothing loth to reach Vossevangen and stop at the door of a comfortable hotel, surprised to find that it was midnight. We had not yet grown accustomed to the absence of darkness.

In the open door stood the night clerk, alert and cheery. "From Stalheim?" he inquired as he sprang forward to assist us from the *kjaerre*.

"From Eide" came the mournful reply of the driver.

We were ushered into a parlor, where steaming coffee and lunch were brought us on a tray. Then we retired to a bedroom with walls of hewn pine timber, new and unpainted, but shining with its own gloss and fragrant with its own forest aroma.

It was a bright morning when we left Vossevangen for Bergen. The narrow-gauge track follows a chain of rivers and small lakes. Hills without number intersect the line, jutting out between the lakes. They are too steep to climb, and there is no way of getting around them, so the train

shoots through them as the shortest solution of the difficulty. Every foot of the way is beautiful—an ever-changing panorama of moss-grown rock, cascade, crystal lake with reflected hills and grassy-roofed cottage. In places we might have plucked bluebells from the car windows, so close they grew on the rocky hillside.

Often, some exceptionally fine scene would cause us to exclaim! "Do look at!"——then suddenly blank darkness and oblivion, as we shot through a tunnel to merge again into daylight and new scenes.



STALHEIM.

Within four hours, we passed through sixty of these tunnels, most of them short. It was not considered necessary to light the cars. We should have thoroughly enjoyed this ride, had it not been for the swinging motion of the train and the poor ventilation.

Another two days of sight-seeing, and we bade goodby to Bergen in a pouring rain. Its citizens declare that the stories of its over-abundant rains are exaggerated. This

may be so; and, before leaving it, let me in justice state that, out of five days spent in the city, we can testify to three days of beautiful sunny weather, though we encountered a shower in the harbor on entering and left it in a flood.

Our thoughts now turned northward to the midnight sun which, at this time of the year, might be seen as far south as the island of Bodö; but the continued rainstorms and misty weather compelled us to postpone the trip. As was subsequently proved, the season on the coast was so unusually cloudy and unfavorable that, had we sailed as intended, we should have been obliged to wait days, perhaps weeks, before obtaining a sight of the sun at midnight. This would have left us in somewhat the same predicament as the Englishman who went to Norway three summers in succession to see the midnight orb and was disappointed each time, the nights continuing cloudy. At length he returned to England, declaring the midnight sun to be merely a myth and a delusion. Though we did not come to a similar decision, we left this famous spectacle for a later visit.



## CHAPTER V.

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### ROUNDING STAT.

We innocently boarded a small steamer, the Jotunheim, bound for Flaaver a day's sail up the coast. Oh, the discomforts of that memorable voyage!

As our driver opened our carriage door on the Bergen wharf, a peasant eagerly seized our valises, scarcely stopping to inquire:

“Shall I carry them aboard?”

The falling rain permitted of no hesitation, and on my assenting, he carried them a few yards to the steamer's deck, then demanded an exorbitant sum for his service, at the same time wringing the water from the corner of his jacket to excite my sympathy.

The inevitable sharper appears in Norway too, of late years—that land formerly celebrated as a place where your purse is not taken into consideration. We heard while there, many Norwegians deploring the fact that young men would loaf and idle on the wharf for a day at a time, waiting for a tourist steamer in hopes of getting baggage to carry and receiving from wealthy travelers perhaps more than they could earn by working for two weeks. Thus, while Norway is fast becoming a tourist-land, materially benefited by the money brought into the country, that “root of all evil” is having its debasing influence on many.

It was ten o'clock in the evening when we left the city, and we then, too late, discovered the sorry fact that there were no berths to be had at any price, the crowd of visitors to the Bergen exposition having engaged them long before. The driving rain compelled us to remain below in the little cabin, where there was scarcely room to sit down. We had, however, many companions in misfortune, and decided to treat it as a joke, thankful that the sheltering islands prevented us from feeling the roll of the Atlantic.

Weary passengers were seen sitting on their own valises or resting on shawls spread upon the floor. The two cabin-maids had given up their berths to some, and worked till long after midnight to make all as comfortable as might be. I admired their cheerful self-sacrifice and asked: "How can you remain so pleasant amid all this?"

"There is discomfort enough," was the reply. "The least we can do is to give a smile and pleasant word to all."

About two o'clock at night I saw the maids seated on shelves in a little china closet, their heads leaning against the wall. They were fast asleep. I like to think that these heroines were actuated by unselfish and charitable motives only; but who shall blame them if visions of many well-earned tips cheered and upheld them through those trying hours?

The weary night passed; and in the morning we heard on all sides remarks like this:

"Wait till we reach Stat!"

"To-day it will be terrible to round Stat!"

"Yes, we'll get our month's wages!"

The mystery connected with the name increased our

apprehensions. In the afternoon, the dreaded place was reached.

Ah! then and there was hurrying to and fro"—a closing of port-holes and a rushing to secure comfortable reclining-places on the couch which extended around the main cabin.

Stat is nothing more than the most western point of the mainland, and, as there are no islands for some distance, the



A HIGH SEA.

in the battle, as spirits of her gods had taken

imbuing her with courage to rise and meet each crashing wave with determined resistance.

What more comforting at a time like this than the saying of the Eastern philosopher—"Even this shall pass away."

It takes three hours to round Stat; but there were "cheeks all pale," which induced the kindhearted captain to turn shoreward after more than one hour, making a circuitous route to get under shelter of some islands lying farther in.

full swell of the ocean strikes the coast. There was a high sea, and the Jotunheim pitched and rolled like a log in the trough of the waves. She seemed to exult though the ancient storm-control of her,

We entered smooth water at last, though not until one unfortunate passenger had her first experience in sea-bathing. She stood below a port-hole which the maid had forgotten to close. As the boat rolled over, the little window was submerged, admitting a stream of brine which drenched her from head to foot.

Well, it is all an event of the past now, not unpleasant to reflect upon, for in the distance the ludicrous side of it stands out in clearer relief than the rest. I would not have missed that day's experience for ten dollars; yet there is no regret in the thought—"I shall not pass this way again."

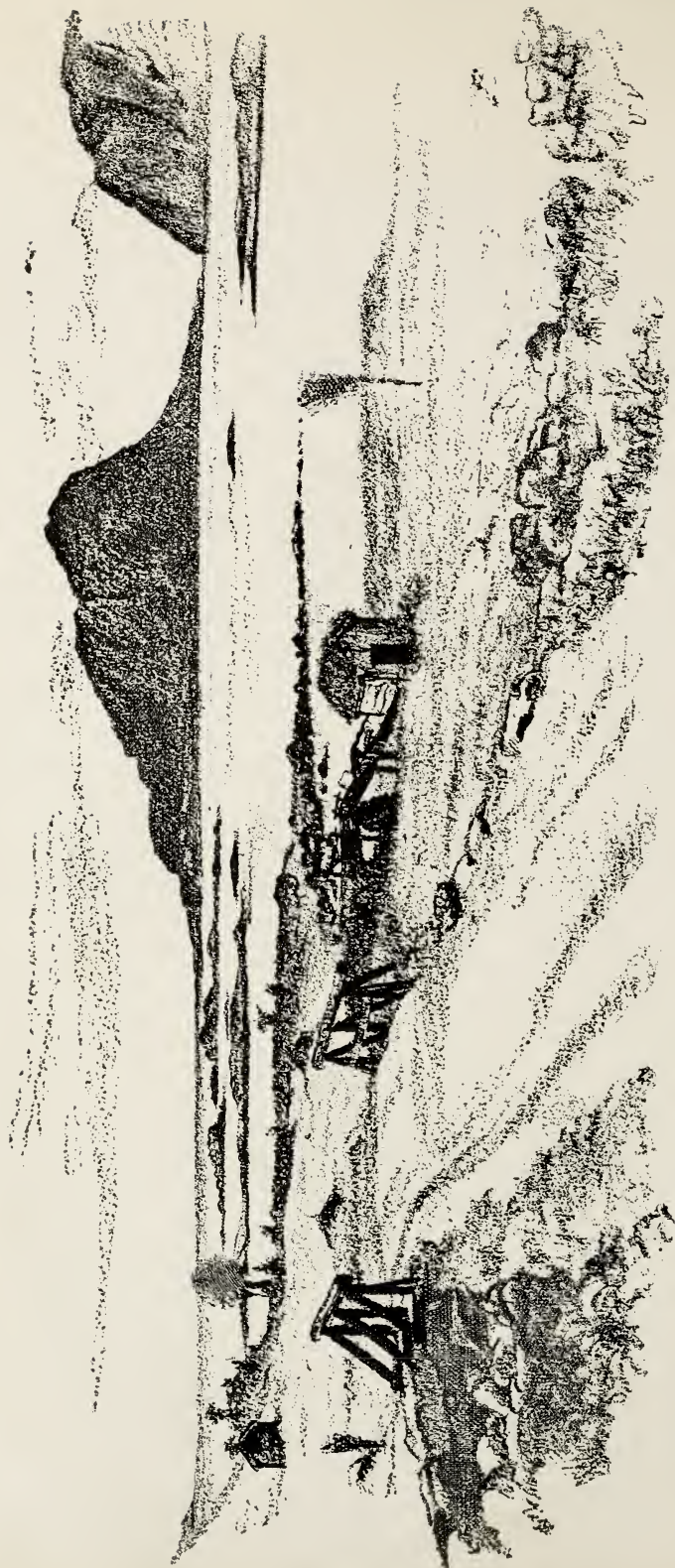
The Jotunheim "lay to" near a great rock in the sea, called the Isle of Flaaver. We were expected; for an active, business-like Norseman leaped nimbly from his rowboat to our steamer's deck, and grasped my hand with:

"I am Nicolai Wiig. Welcome to Norway."

He then took us and our baggage into his boat and rowed quickly to Molthumyr, mother's birthplace.







COAST OF MOLTUMYR.

## CHAPTER VII.

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### THE OLD HOME.

Molthumyr is an estate occupying the whole of a gently-sloping valley which rises from the sea, a heather-clad mountain guarding it on either side. It lies on a large island partly sheltered by other islands—high jagged peaks.

Contending emotions strove for the mastery as we approached the landing that mother sailed away from so long ago, never to return. The old house—her home, stands near the beach, almost hidden in a grove of linden and mountain-ash. There are the same uneven, footworn stones in the pathway over which her baby feet stumbled; the same spacious old house, log-built, with wide windows, their sashes swinging outward like doors. The turf-thatched roof is a mass of waving grass, bluebells, buttercups, daisies and violets! The old rooms, slightly altered, would be familiar to her, and were not altogether strange to me as I seemed to stand there in her place.

In the hall we met Marie, the good wife of Nicolai. She was formerly a peasant girl, a servant of his mother. Now that she is mistress of the large estate, she is known far and wide as the kindest and most helpful of neighbors. I shall never forget her pale face and frightened look when we first met her, nor her smile and expression of relief when we



addressed her in Norse, and that her own dialect. Shortly after she made the following confession:

"I cried when I heard of your intended visit. I felt sure that we should not be able to understand each other, and I wished that we had a finer house. I wanted Nicolai to have the old stairway torn down and replaced by a better one, but he only said, 'If those Americans will not be satisfied with things as we have them, they need not remain longer than they choose.'"

Nicolai rose at once higher in our estimation, for we could not but admire this honest, independent spirit. We assured Marie that no palace could have pleased us like the old house, every board and rafter of which is sacred through memory of her who lived here and loved it.

Everything in and about the house was scrupulously clean, and there was that air of comfort which characterizes the dwellings of the "better class." The little parlor had painted floor and ceiling, papered walls, large windows with lace curtains, upholstered sofa and chairs, a comfortable rocker or two, pictures, statuettes, flowers and bric-a-brac.

Soon after our arrival an old man came slowly over the stones of the path, feeling the way with his cane. There was no mistaking that face; it was uncle Johan, mother's eldest brother. We knew him at once by the striking resemblance. I cannot tell what a train of sad yet precious memories were awakened by the first sight of those aged features—memories of her now passed "within the veil." When he spoke, it seemed almost as if she were speaking, for his voice and expression were hers.

He has been blind for many years, and his hearing is



UNCLE JOHAN.

rapidly failing; but, at the age of eighty-six, his intellect is still clear, and he takes a lively interest in matters past and present. Before losing his eyesight he kept a diary; and in this bulky and remarkable volume we found chronicled events covering the greater part of a century.

"My memory is failing me," was his repeated complaint while trying to narrate some bygone incident; but he never tired of questioning about our home life in America. He lives in his little cottage, within a few yards of his son's house, and we spent a part of each day there with the lonely old man. He is the only surviving member of a large family—"the last leaf." One by one the earth-ties have been broken.

"And the names he loved to hear,  
Have been carved for many a year  
On the tomb."

Prayerfully and hopefully, he looks forward to the hour of his release.

The three weeks of pensive pleasure that followed seem now like a delightful dream. We wandered along the broad beach where mother played, picking curious shells when the tide was low. We rowed among the miniature islands where the seagulls reigned and disputed our right to invade their realm, screaming and flapping their wings about our heads. We gathered from the bottom what to us were "treasures of the deep"—pretty sea-urchins and star fishes. We visited the peasant cottages, where rows of old-fashioned children stared at us, while sun-browned fishermen and motherly women—mother's playmates—told reminiscences of their young days.

Our meals were served in a large dining-room at any

hour we chose—breakfast usually at nine, dinner at ten and coffee at five and supper at eight. Our host would sometimes eat with us, and on Sundays the schoolmaster, who boarded at the house but usually took his meals alone in a small room adjoining the kitchen. A visitor from Christiania, with her three children, took her meals in her own room; the six servants took theirs in the kitchen; and so there were no less than four tables set in as many different rooms.

One day the hay-loft of the great barn was swept and garnished with green boughs—indications of some important event about to take place.

“We are to hold a mission-fair in the barn this afternoon,” explained Marie. “Will you come?” “Most assuredly.”

Soon crowds of peasants began to arrive, the women dressed in homespun of various pretty colors and with kerchiefs on their heads. On entering the barn we found them seated on long benches, roughly built for like occasions.

A hymn was sung. Then a fisherman arose and offered a simple prayer, after which he spoke for about thirty minutes, words of such convincing earnestness and touching pathos as I have rarely heard from any pulpit. Evidently, the man knew whereof he spoke, and we could not but “take notice of him that he had been with Jesus.”

The hush which followed was broken by a fisher-lad who struck up a hymn alone, singing it to the music of his guitar. He sang of the storm of Galilee. The soulful words and soft music were beautiful in their simplicity.

Then came the sale of a great many articles, all strictly

useful—stockings, mittens, shirts, aprons, etc.—all knocked off to the highest bidder. Refreshments also were sold; but in place of the ice-cream, cake and lemonade usual at such places in America, behold milk, bretzels and flatbrod!

Flocks of queer little girls with their clumsy shoes, long skirts and grandmotherly ways, marched about with a bretzel in one hand and a huge sheet of fine flatbrod in the other, their bright smiles of satisfaction showing that these were luxuries which they did not enjoy every day.

Now the sale became merry as the jolly young auctioneer held up some yards of coarse, crocheted, wool trimming—the sole piece of fancy-work there—wittily referring to it as “this funny thing.” While Vida was bidding for some extra warm socks to take home to father, I entered into conversation with old Iver, a fisherman of ninety years, and learned that he had known my sainted mother from infancy.

“Yes, it was I who had the pleasure of taking her and your father to their new home at Aalesund,” he remarked. “We sailed out from the quay here, in my boat, the day after the wedding.”

Old Iver was a most interesting character. I called on him later in his hut, the front door of which was four feet high. The ceiling would not allow me to stand upright without removing my hat. Everything in the hut gave evidence of the barest poverty; but, near the window, mending a cracked wooden bowl, sat the old man, his face fairly shining with joyous anticipation as he spoke of his “rich inheritance” in the world beyond. In homelier phrase, he echoed the words of England’s poet laureate:



"I hope to see my Pilot, face to face,  
When I have crossed the bar."

I must not forget to introduce you to Hauge, the school-master, who wore a white shirt and snowy collar every day, betokening his high standing in the social scale. I mentioned that he boarded at the house, but took his meals in a private dining-room; and as he lodged at uncle Johan's, we saw little of him for several days, catching only an occasional glimpse of his well-built figure as he walked to and from school. In fact, he was rather shy of making our acquaintance; but the ice once broken, he proved to be an exceedingly intelligent and agreeable young man.

He is such a staunch patriot that he has no desire to "go to America," which is the highest ambition of the majority of Norse youths. No; Norway is good enough for him; and with commendable zeal he has set himself to the



HAUGE.

task of furthering her interests according to his ability. So he works for temperance, for the elevation of the peasantry, and for a national language.

Hauge feels keenly the humiliating fact that his country has no universal written language of her own, but uses "the borrowed Danish." This language has been the standard,

and is taught in the schools throughout, though it is not the language of the people, being spoken with modifications, by only some of the cultivated classes. The language of the



country consists of a great many dialects—mixtures of Danish and the ancient Norse, now the Icelandic. Some of these dialects are pleasing to the ear, and there has been a growing sentiment in their favor as they are considered by many to be neither as broad as the Icelandic nor as flat as the Danish. Henrik Ibsen, Ivar Aasen, Bjorstjerne Bjornson, and other prominent authors often write in dialect, because the peculiarities of this rugged country and its people require its own unique expressions in which to fittingly describe them.

Now, the Norwegians are by nature as proud and independent a people as their neighbors, the Danes and Swedes, and need to “borrow of no man.” Consequently, thoughtful men of the land have put their heads together with the object of forming a national language from the best of the now existing dialects. Their efforts have so far succeeded that the language, it is hoped, will soon be authorized by law, while a professor will be engaged to teach it in the University of Christiania. Ere long, they expect to see it taught in all the schools, and some time they hope to return the Danish to Denmark with a “Tak for aanet. (Thanks for the loan.)”

There have been important temperance reforms also of late years in most of the large cities, the municipal governments having taken control of the liquor traffic. A limited number of licenses have been granted, the holders retaining a small per cent of the profits, while the rest accrues to the government. In this way intemperance has greatly decreased, and the government profits from the sale of liquor have been expended on public improvements and charities.

Hauge is not satisfied with this compromise with evil, but works for prohibition with even greater earnestness than he studied his English under our tutorship. How impossible he found it to sound *it* properly! and yet, at our request, how successfully he mounted to the turf-thatched roof and gathered for us great bunches of grass, blue-bells and buttercups!

One day I startled him with the question. "May we visit your school?"

Obtaining a rather reluctant consent, we entered the small school-house which stands on the beach within a few feet of the sea. We found a cheerless room with dark, bare walls, staring, curtainless windows, an elevated, pulpit-like teacher's desk, and long benches on which were ranged thirty or more children. A small blackboard and a map of Norway hung on the walls. The atmosphere was anything but sanitary, though in justice it must be said that there were physiology charts, and we listened to a recitation in hygiene. This excellent branch of study seemed to be taught both by precept and by practice, for during intermission the windows were flung wide open to ventilate the room. Under the pupils' desk, however, rows of saliva were noticeable, and the master apologetically remarked: "I presume that in America you have cuspidors in your school rooms." When I found my voice, I gave him some information regarding our American schools. Out in the fresh sea air the favorite sport of these children was what they called "teasing the waves." Running out on the sand as far as they dared in the wake of the retreating wave, they ran shoreward only in time to escape its fury as it turned angrily to chase them back.

"This school is one of the most primitive of its kind," said Hauge. The better class in the country engage a governess to teach their children; while in the cities and towns are schools which can well compare with those of Germany, England or the United States.

The public school problem is one of the leading questions of the day in Norway. All right thinking persons now realize that the only way to elevate the lower classes is to establish common schools similar to those in America. The peasants will then, by association with the better class, gradually rise to its level.

American influence is powerfully felt there. The beacon light held aloft by Liberty at the gateway of our republic, has sent its beams clear across the Atlantic!

About two miles to the north of Molthunyr lies Herö, a small islet containing the parish church. We recalled the stories that we had heard of exciting voyages to this island, and thought of poor Lena, mother's youngest sister, who could not for a long time be persuaded to step into a boat to brave the passage after a black-eyed gypsy woman had told her that she would one day meet her death by drowning. Though she never quite outgrew the fear, she crossed the Atlantic safely; but the omenous words proved true at last, for she was

"Numbered with that three hundred  
Who failed to reach the shore"

on that terrible night, when the "Lady Elgin" foundered in lake Michigan.

We were rowed over to Herö one Sunday morning, and our boat crowded in among scores of others that for med

fringe around the island. Groups of people loitered on the green turf, talking in subdued tones becoming to the day and place, then walked slowly and solemnly into the church. There were many bright costumes for all had left their homes in holiday attire. In former years the peasant women carried their best dresses, aprons, and kerchiefs in bundles or in small chests, and sat down in the grass or among the rocks about the church to put them on, taking them off at the close of the services. There was then no danger of getting them spoiled by the briny spray, and they could be kept bright and "new" for fifteen years! There was, however, some inconvenience in carrying their clothes so far, so they improved on this plan by having a small building erected near the church in which to keep their Sunday dresses. Its door had a secure lock, though they acknowledged that this was an unnecessary precaution.

Nicolai led us into the church, between the long rows of pews crowded with peasants—the men on one side of the room, the women on the other, then up a short flight of steps to an elevated platform. Here beside the altar was the parson's family pew and several seats designed for the better class. They were nearly empty.

The old stone church which mother attended has been replaced by this frame building; but the stones of the old form the foundation of the new, while the altar together with many interior decorations are the same that were used in the old church.

When the long sermon was ended, the announcement was made that five infants were now to be christened. These with their god-mothers had been waiting in a small



A BUSINESS MAN OF FIFTY

vestry behind the great altar which concealed its door. When we discovered that this room also contained an exit we slipped out into the fresh air and wandered through a long-disused cemetery near by, reading among the half-effaced inscriptions on the broken tombstones names of those "to fortune and to fame unknown."

We lived in the past that Sunday

The Isle of Flaaver lies less than a mile from Molthumyr—a low rock merely, over which the surf dashes wildly in a western gale. Though small in size it is big in importance, for a telegraph office has put it in direct touch with the great outside world. This office occupies a part of the spacious dwelling house which stands on the sheltered eastern end of the island. A large warehouse on the wharf shows that an extensive business is carried on here.



The ruler of this small empire is a business man of fifty, who deals in fish and amuses himself by collecting curious specimens of ocean life for the Bergen museum.

Many beautiful and odd-looking fish may be seen floundering about in the boats which land here. In a little inlet we found a whole garden of delicate, scarlet sea-anemones clinging to the stones. Those which the out-going tide had



HAY FROM THE ISLAND.

left bare were nothing but drops of jelly; but those under water spread their star-like crowns to the sun, and we tried to kill and preserve some in alcohol as we did the



urchins and sea-stars. Of course, they invariably baffled us by drawing in their petals as soon as they were removed from the water.

Flaaver lies in the direct route of coast steamers, and in summer the hospitable house is filled with guests from city and country. The life here is one of ease and enjoyment. Nobody is hurried. There is time for all to take a comfortable sleep after dinner, then rise to linger and chat over the coffee. The hostess, governess and house-keeper have oceans of time for needle-work as they entertain their company in the parlor or saunter over the grass-grown rock.

Handsome needle work has a prominent part in house-decorations in all parts of the country, and frequently there is too much of it. We noticed here some embroidery known as "Hardanger-work," some of it so fine and rare that a small piece sold for thirty dollars at the Bergen exposition.

Near the house a few cherry trees, currant and berry bushes have been coaxed to grow. Sufficient grass is cut on this and neighboring islands to support two or three cows, though how it ever took root is a question. One islet is used as a pasture for the cows. Far out to northward, a lonely rock rises, St. Helena-like, out of the blue; but the information that it is used as a hog-pasture robbed it of all romance. Domestic animals here become fearless sailors, for they are so often transported from one isle to another.

If you wish to see nature in one of its wildest forms, visit Rundö after a storm. This island lies unprotected out in the western surf. The waves have worn caverns in its walls through which the breakers dash with a resounding roar. In other places they sweep high up on the cliff, seeking

to wash away the thousands of sea-fowl which inhabit it, only to roll back with a baffled wail as the birds scream with defiant laughter.

Under shelter of the lofty Rundö lies a low island which contrasts with it strangely. Here we were shown through a butter and cheese factory, after which we rowed out on a large fresh-water pond near by to gather water-lilies. The entire pond was a mass of beautiful white lilies of mammoth size and now in full bloom.

The faithful Nicolai was untiring in his efforts to make our visit pleasant. 'My work can wait,' he would say; 'but all I can do will not meet my obligations to you for coming so far to see us.'

He took us to the little grist-mill built over the brook, and showed us how the water ground his rye and oats. Nearly every farmer has a mill of his own, for the numerous streams furnish abundant water-power. Though Nicolai has a Champion mower imported from New York, which he uses in his level fields, the ordinary implement for cutting hay is a scythe with a short blade and straight handle. This compels the mower to stand in an awkward, stooping posture, and the amount cut at one sweep is small indeed; but, as the hay is often gathered on steep hill-sides and among the rocks, this sickle is more serviceable than a larger scythe would be; besides, time seems to be no factor with the Norse workman. There is plenty of it and to spare. Three men are often set to do what one American workman would be expected to do alone, and each man takes his after-dinner nap. And yet, how soon on their arrival in our country, these people catch the contagion of our hurried, restless

spirit! Americans live in the future; Norsemen in the present, enjoying life as they go.

In one of our rambles we heard a peculiar, rumbling noise like distant thunder. Nicolai explained that they were making flatbrod in a neighboring cottage, and the noise we heard was only the roll of the furrowed rolling-pin—"only that and nothing more." Baking-time which usually comes twice during the year, is an important event. Then all the members of the family except the babies are mustered for service. The great sheets of thin, crisp flatbrod are stacked from floor to ceiling in a room set apart for that purpose. The store-house is generally separate from the main building and raised on posts to prevent any possible dampness.

Lest we excite unmerited sympathy, let me remind you that my sister and I were not required to eat this flatbrod, though we often did, and found our appetites for it increasing. A blue-painted, wooden chest made weekly voyages to a bakery on an island three miles distant, and came back laden with the finest of bread, buns, coffee-cake and pastry. The invigorating sea air enabled us to do full justice to these as well as to the choice meats and the many varieties of fine fish which surprised us day by day. The national dessert is a dainty, jelly-like pudding made from some kind of fruit or berry-juice, and often decorated with a delicately colored icing. It is always served cold with a generous supply of sweet cream, and might tempt an epicure. The parson's wife, with thoughtful courtesy, sent us greens from her garden, knowing how fond Americans are of such relishes.

We shall always remember the jovial parish minister and his equally good-natured wife, who were so pleased at

the opportunity of reviewing their English. Vida's Norse amused the parsoness not a little.

"It would make a stone laugh," declared she, "to hear that broad dialect rendered with a fine American accent."

We were invited to the parsonage which lay four mile distant. For ten successive days a dreary, drizzling rain prevented us from making the visit; yet the time passed merrily in the cozy parlor where we snuggled up to the peat fire and read or wrote or embroidered. The never-failing tray with its perfection of coffee and tempting waffles called regularly at five. Sometimes our host would drop in to amuse us with one of his original discourses, and occasionally he would open the parlor door, introduce a visitor, and leave us with the parting command, "Now talk."

At length one morning the sun struggled through the clouds of fog, and our host hurried Marie, Vida and I into the *kjaerre* to drive to the parsonage. It was during this drive that we noticed many odd-looking, black mounds which might at a distance be mistaken for beaver lodges or Lapland huts. On closer inspection, they proved to be rounded piles composed of sticks of peat left there to dry. There are deep and extensive bogs along the western coast which supply, not only peat but also pine-roots, rich in resin. These are dug out of the boggy soil and used as kindling. Judging by the number and size of these roots, there must have been at one time, great pine forests along this part of the coast which is now almost treeless.

Soon the parsonage loomed up from a grove—a fine old house, quite lordly as compared to the surrounding cottages. The parson met us with the quaint welcome in English—

‘How do the ladies do, then?’ Rocking-chairs were placed for us; and here let me remark that this article of furniture is not such an unheard-of luxury in Norway as an American traveler once stated. I was requested to testify to the fact that “even an obscure parish minister has three cozy rockers in his sitting-room.”

The parson has also three hopeful sons, all expert smokers. Even the youngest, a boy of fourteen, produced his long-stemmed meerschaum pipe, lounged down in an easy chair, and had his after-dinner smoke, taking advantage of his father’s absence.

They all seemed oblivious to the fact that tobacco-fumes are not always agreeable to ladies even though puffed through meerschaums. The young gentlemen began to look quite ethereal through the blue haze which enveloped them, and I was forced to escape to the breezy hallway to breathe freely.

In the afternoon the rain began to pour down afresh, and the leaden skies showed no signs of breaking. We were urged to remain over night; but it had been arranged that Nicolai should call for us, and here he was, clad in a water-proof suit. As he came dripping into the hall, he handed us three yellow oil cloth fisher-coats which he ordered us to put on. The order was easily obeyed for there was ample room in them. With unmasculine and unexampled thoughtfulness, the good man had foreseen that our American hats could not survive a storm like this; so he had brought a *tena*—(an oval, wooden box with a tight cover) in which to carry them home. He was greeted with a burst of applause from the assembled family when he opened the *tena* and brought



forth a fur cap which he clapped on my head, and for Vida, a sailor's sou'wester!

It was a grotesque looking but merry trio that climbed into the *kjaerre*, spread the leather lap-robe, and were carried swiftly through the driving rain. Our umbrellas were useless for the wind was blowing a hurricane. My cap which was six sizes too large, kept slipping down over my eyes, while it allowed the rain to trickle down the back of my neck in a small cascade.

I almost envied Vida whose sou'wester shed the rain beautifully over her shoulders.

Nicolai never passes a neighbor without answering his "Well met" with a few cheerful words, and he stopped to talk to a group of men whom we passed. Our appearance must have been extremely ludicrous, but to their

credit be it said that they did not even smile.

Relics of the Middle Ages abound near Molthumyr. On



NICOLAI WIIG.

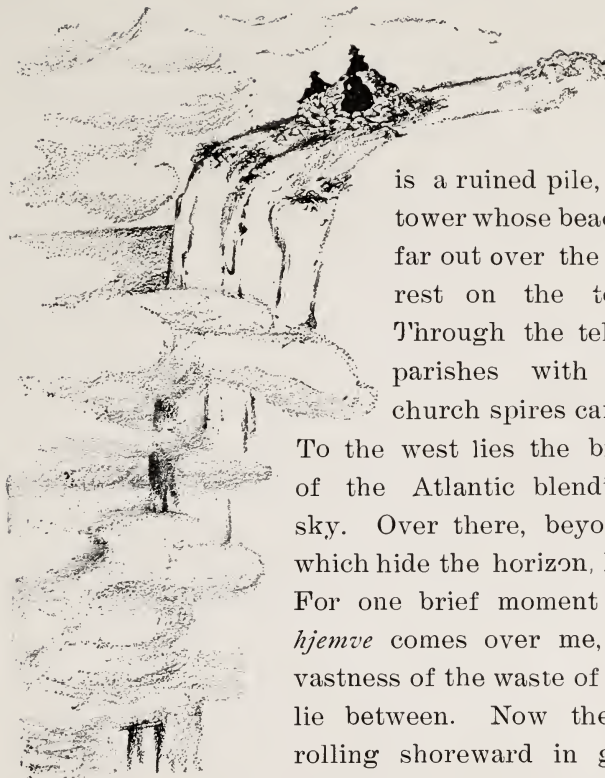


seaward, and they sail away, leaving the dead in the solemn stillness, broken only by the ceaseless moan of the surf on the shore and the piercing cry of some sea-bird.

These giant-mounds have all been opened. There is a hollow in the center of each showing where the stones have been removed; and the bones, weapons and other curiosities which the graves contained have been long since carried off by relic-hunters.

One of the mountains which guard Molthumyr is Hisegen which, like a true knight of old, bares its bosom to the fury of the western tempests, while the valley lies sheltered by its side. We climbed it one sunny afternoon. Up through knee-deep heather we toiled for several hours, well repaid at last by the view which the summit afforded. We walked to the western brow of the mountain which rises in one stupendous, unbroken wall from the sea.

Sit down on this bank of mulberry vines as near the verge as you dare, and look downward. More than 1800 feet below us, lies the calm, blue sea, green on the shallows—a sea of sapphire set with emeralds. From its bosom rise scores of islands dotted with verdure. Those white specks along their shores are not sea-birds ranged on the rocks, but fisher cottages. It is Sunday, and not a sail dares to disturb the restful repose of Old Ocean; but see that tiny steamer moving so stealthily in and out among the islands. It holds its breath as if fearing to intrude on the stillness, and we hear no whistle as it nears the ports. A thread of silver in its wake betrays its course. To the north lies the peaceful valley, while high up on the steeps are flocks of sheep and goats feeding.



But let us climb higher.  
Here on the very summit  
is a ruined pile, once a signal  
tower whose beacon fire shown  
far out over the sea. We will  
rest on the top of that.  
Through the telescope seven  
parishes with their white  
church spires can be counted.

To the west lies the broad expanse  
of the Atlantic blending with the  
sky. Over there, beyond the mists  
which hide the horizon, lies my home.  
For one brief moment a feeling of  
*hjemme* comes over me, as I feel the  
vastness of the waste of waters which  
lie between. Now the mists come  
rolling shoreward in great, woolly  
clouds which encircle the mountain  
below us, shutting out, as if in spite, the beautiful picture.

Our reflections were cut short by the ever-practical Nicolai:

"It is time to hurry home, for if the fog overtakes us we are liable to lose our way. We may then be obliged to trust to the uncertain guidance of some stray cow to lead us down the mountain."

We did not stop to parley, for, though the novelty of sitting above the clouds was pleasant, we had no desire to

remain there all night. Then came an exciting race with the fog—down over the rocks and matted heather, sliding, jumping, all but running, while behind us came the white wall of mist, shutting out all the scene above; but we won the race, and in an incredibly short time were down in the valley with good appetites for the evening meal.

Quiet, simple-hearted Molthumyr, unassuming and unnoticed—a mere atom in the great, noisy world—yet inclosing between its hills, unwritten volumes of herioc deeds, of love's romance, of hopes realized or blasted! Its every hut and hill and islet is associated with the oft-repeated stories of mother's girlhood, and there was a half-sad yet pleasing fascination about the place which cannot be described.

With regret we bade adieu to our friends and to the dear old home with its thronging memories, and sailed away to Larsnes which lies fifteen miles distant on the opposite side of the island.

## CHAPTER VII.

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### LARSNES.

Who would expect to find a southern garden among these barren cliffs—a bit of sunny Italy transplanted to this northern isle of the sea?

If you ever have the pleasure of visiting Norway and sail up the coast from Bergen, stop at Larsnes. Here in a sheltered cove you will find a small but comfortable hotel, not English in style but characteristic of Norway. Honey-suckle and woodbine climb over its piazza, and choice flowers bloom in the garden which has a high hedge of thornless white “roses” on two sides, reminding you of Maeldune’s mystic Isle of Flowers, where “Millions of roses sprang without thorn from the bush.” In front of the house is a lawn shaded by tall linden trees, and back of it, birch, mountain ash, pine and larch grow in profusion among the moss-covered boulders to the very top of the hill. We wondered at the partiality of Mother Nature in thus favoring this spot, while in all the surrounding country scarcely a bush or tree could be seen among the budding heather. On inquiry we learned, however, that artistic hands have planted these trees in this wild way, imitating nature so well that the sharpest might be deceived. True, the ash and lindens once planted have entered into the spirit of the

work, and every year scatter their seeds broadcast, thus aiding the gardener by planting hundreds of young trees which find roothold anywhere among the rocks.

You will appreciate the luscious fruit which grows in the garden. The currant bushes rise high above your head, laden with the large, sweet grape currants. The gooseberries are the largest that I have seen, while the strawberries would do justice to California.

The hostess is motherly, her very presence, sunshine. Discontent and *ennui* must flee before her genial smile and irresistible good humor. It was pleasant to behold with what kindness and reverence her infirm old mother was treated. In her home "grandma" was acknowledged queen, and treated with the greatest consideration by all. It was "grandma" who was first led to the table and seated in her place of honor, her daughter on one side, her grandson on the other, to see that she was helped to every dainty. The guests were afterwards seated.

In the afternoon family and guests assembled in the parlor, where coffee was served amid social converse; and again at five, the housekeeper brought in wine, preserves and confectionery which were taken at leisure and did not interrupt the music, reading and fancy-work. If you like, you may have your refreshments served in Montebello, a vine covered grotto up on the hillside and overlooking the sea.

One stormy morning we were told that two sailors had been hired to take us in their boat to the Dolsten Cave, several miles from Larsnes. A young man of the family was to act as guide, and the housekeeper was to accompany





HERRING FLEET AT LARSNES IN WINTER





us. We were instructed to dress in garments able to withstand all wear and tear.

Do not miss a visit to this cave, that is, if you have courage and endurance sufficient to brave its shadows. It is the most remarkable cavern on the coast, and extends for some distance under the sea. Its entrance is difficult, leading down through a miry passage where boots are the only serviceable footgear. Then daylight disappears, and a lighted candle is placed in the hands of each person. Several spacious chambers are entered, their walls containing numerous autographs of early date. In places the passageways connecting these chambers are so narrow as to hardly admit a stout person.

Now the guide calls a warning "Halt!" A rope is tied around your waist, you are lifted over the edge of the cliff, and lowered down a distance of about thirteen feet. The sensation of going down into the darkness is not very pleasant, and it is with a feeling of relief that you touch terra firma once more. The adventures related by merry parties that have ventured into the depths of this grand cavern are both exciting and amusing. According to an old tradition, a dog was once put into the cave and "He came out in Scotland, but without a hair on his body!"

Larsnes lies on the steamship route between Bergen and Thronthjem, but, as yet, is little known and frequented by tourists.

Refreshed by the royal hospitality of the place, we boarded the steamer *Storfjord*, and, after meandering through a labyrinth of islands for half the night, were transferred to another steamer and woke up next morning in Aalesund.

When we had retired to our cabin at midnight, the captain had assured us that, though we should be in port early, we need be in no haste about rising, but, as he emphatically expressed it, might rest with "knusende ro!" (crushing composure.)

How could we "rest with crushing composure" when, in the first place, the shelf-like couches on which we slept sloped floorward, threatening each moment to land us there, and, in the second place, the famous old city, father's home, lay just outside our cabin, ready to burst like a revelation on our sight at any moment we should choose to step up on the wharf!

It is needless to say that we hurried on deck.



A ALESUND FROM THE FJORD.

## CHAPTER VIII.

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### SONDMORE.

"Stand by the ocean coast,  
Out in the straits where the steamer is plowing  
Swiftly, with quick breaths, the white-crested sea,—  
There where, of howling storms, breakers are tuning,  
Fitfully, playfully, their melody.  
See you, to eastward, o'er mountain crest, stand,  
Lifted above it, a wonderful, beckoning, glorious land?  
Those are the towering, dizzying, glistening, snowy peaks—  
Giants of Sondmore's Alpen-land!"

—Randers.

Molthumyr and Larsnes lie in the shire of Sondmore, of which Aalesund is the most important city. It is a fishing port with houses huddled together as if in fright, at the base of a mountain called "Aksla," (Shoulders), resembling the huge shoulders of some decapitated giant still guarding this ancient city of the "Land of Thor."

Such was our first impression. We found, however, that our first view did not do it justice. It is only the older portion of the city, built in the dreamy days of superstition, that is crowded under the protecting shadow of Aksla. Farther back there is a pretty park, and from this, a zigzag road has been hewn up the mountain side. This leads to a rocky platform. Seated here, we had a bird's-eye view of the city and found that it covers several islands connected by bridges. "Norway's Venice," an enthusiastic traveler

once called it. Its situation is really beautiful. On all sides rise those stern, lofty islands. To the west lies a long, low island—a curiosity on this coast. It was pointed out to us as being of historic interest. There lived “Ganger Rolf,” leader of that daring Viking band which invaded France and conquered Normandy. Lived there? Yes—that is, they say he claimed the island, and sometimes moored his ships there when, with his followers, he returned, triumphant and laden with booty, from a raid in foreign lands. Little cared he for the comfort and repose which a home-roof afforded:

‘ He scorns to sleep ’neath the smoky rafter,  
He plows with his boat the roaring deep;  
The billows boil and the storm howls after,  
But the tempest is only a thing of laughter,  
The sea-king loves it better than sleep.”

Here in Aalesund during the summer months, there is one long day, though it is some degrees south of the Arctic circle. To be sure, the sun does sink below the horizon for an hour or two, but it is not missed for it leaves behind a brilliant, sunset sky which blends into the rosy clouds of sunrise; so the short night (which cannot be called night), is the pleasantest part of the day. You may sew or read outdoors if you like, till the sun again mounts the horizon to continue its circle around the heavens.

On the other side of Aksla are rolling fields of oats and clover, with many tasteful villas, half hidden by ornamental shade trees and surrounded by fruitful orchards. Could you shut out the frame of hills, stern and gray, which inclose this fertile plain, you might fancy yourself in northern Illinois.

This is Aalesund’s “country summer resort.” As the

city itself, built on breezy islands, seemed to us scarcely more than a resort, I thought it superfluous to leave town in order to rusticate; but, when I intimated as much, I was given to understand that it is a city of some consequence, "close and hot in the summer."

It was built in the fifteenth century, and contains about 10,000 inhabitants who are justly proud of it.

An hour's drive through the pleasant country above mentioned, brought up to Old Borgund Church. Built by the Catholics centuries before the Reformation, it was ransacked and plundered by the reformers. Many of its rich carvings and oil paintings were broken or thrown into an attic of the church. Later, lovers of the antique among the Lutherans found and restored the valuable decorations and there they are to-day, speaking of a bygone age. The great altar, the pulpit and the gallery railings are covered with relief carvings in dark oak, representing scenes of the Old and New Testaments.

These carvings are of real artistic worth, and the same may be said of the ancient-looking oil-paintings which adorn the walls. Some of these date back to 1625, and are portraits of early church dignitaries, their stiff postures and odd dress making them almost ludicrous. Their colors have recently been retouched, and, as relics, I suppose they are treasures; but they seem oddly out of place in this solemn cathedral where levity is to have no room. Their proper place is a museum.

The stone walls of Borgund, six or more feet in thickness, defied the flames which, in the fifteenth century, were kindled to destroy it, and it is to-day Aalesund's principal church.



Looking eastward from Borgund, we see, inland, great masses of snow, tinged purple and gold by the declining sun, and rising one above the other till they appear to blend with the sky.

Sondmore contains some of the wildest scenery of this most picturesque country. Could we reach the summit of one of its 5,000 ft. peaks, we should see the whole area a vast sea of broken mountains—jagged peaks crowned with eternal snow. Some of the grandest of Norway's fjords penetrate this Alpine wilderness.

You could not tire of Sondmore. Its ever-changing variety of scenery is its peculiar attraction. The writer who once sought to describe this indescribable region did not exaggerate when he said:

“In a day's journey through Sondmore you may see Switzerland's Alps and glaciers, the Tyrol's chasms and narrow valleys, Scotland's beautiful islands, and Iceland's naked, sea-washed cliffs.”

And, side by side with these, are warm, green valleys and fruitful gardens, fair as England's own. Wedded to it all, is the sea, which loves Sondmore. Its arms twine about the mountain bases and its tides rise and fall, lapping the gray rock caressingly. To the farthest limits of the region the ocean wanders, to receive its thousand waterfalls and to form a clear mirror in which to reflect this Switzerland afloat.

We believe that the famous English alpinist, William Cecil Singsby, knew whereof he spake when he wrote:

“I know of no mountain landscape in Switzerland or in Norway which possesses such rare beauty as that of Sond-





HAILU MOUNTAINS.



ALESUND.





more. There are richer sceneries, more fruitful sceneries and sceneries of greater magnitude; but nowhere is there such a rich blending of wonderful mountain formations, smiling foregrounds and inclosed fjords with glorious coloring over it all as in beautiful Sondmore."

It had been our intention to sail at once to the Romsdal from Aalesund, but our friends would not listen to such a plan.

"You must not leave Sondmore until you have sailed through its fjords," they insisted.

We shall never cease to be grateful for their advice. Come with me, and we will seek to go over again that three days' tour.

We board a steamer to sail up the Hjorung fjord. It is a chilly, foggy morning, rather unfavorable it seems; but, as we enter the fjord, we are sheltered from the ocean breeze, and the fog breaks into clouds which jealously envelop the tops of the mountains rising boldly from the sea on either hand. We can only guess at their heights as we gaze upward. Rather provoking, you think. But see! Now and then a peak raises its hoary head above the clouds and the sun breaks fitfully through them, gilding a crag here and there. The effect is singularly beautiful.

These spurs of gray rock and glittering snow that rise above the clouds, appear to have tremendous heights though in reality they are not more than from 2,000 to 5,000 feet. Now the clouds which have only enhanced the beauty of the picture, are scattered, the sun shines brightly, and we see that the fjord is walled by an endless succession of sharp peaks of fantastic forms. A bright fancy can see



among them, not only temples and castles, but monsters of many descriptions.

Between two lofty peaks, a glacier comes down in glittering grandeur to the sea. At its base is a large vaulted opening, and within this, men are at work. They appear no larger than rabbits, standing in the great door of this natural ice-house, where they are cutting ice and sliding the blocks down to a ship which lies at the wharf. This sight on a warm day in early August is too novel to be soon forgotten.

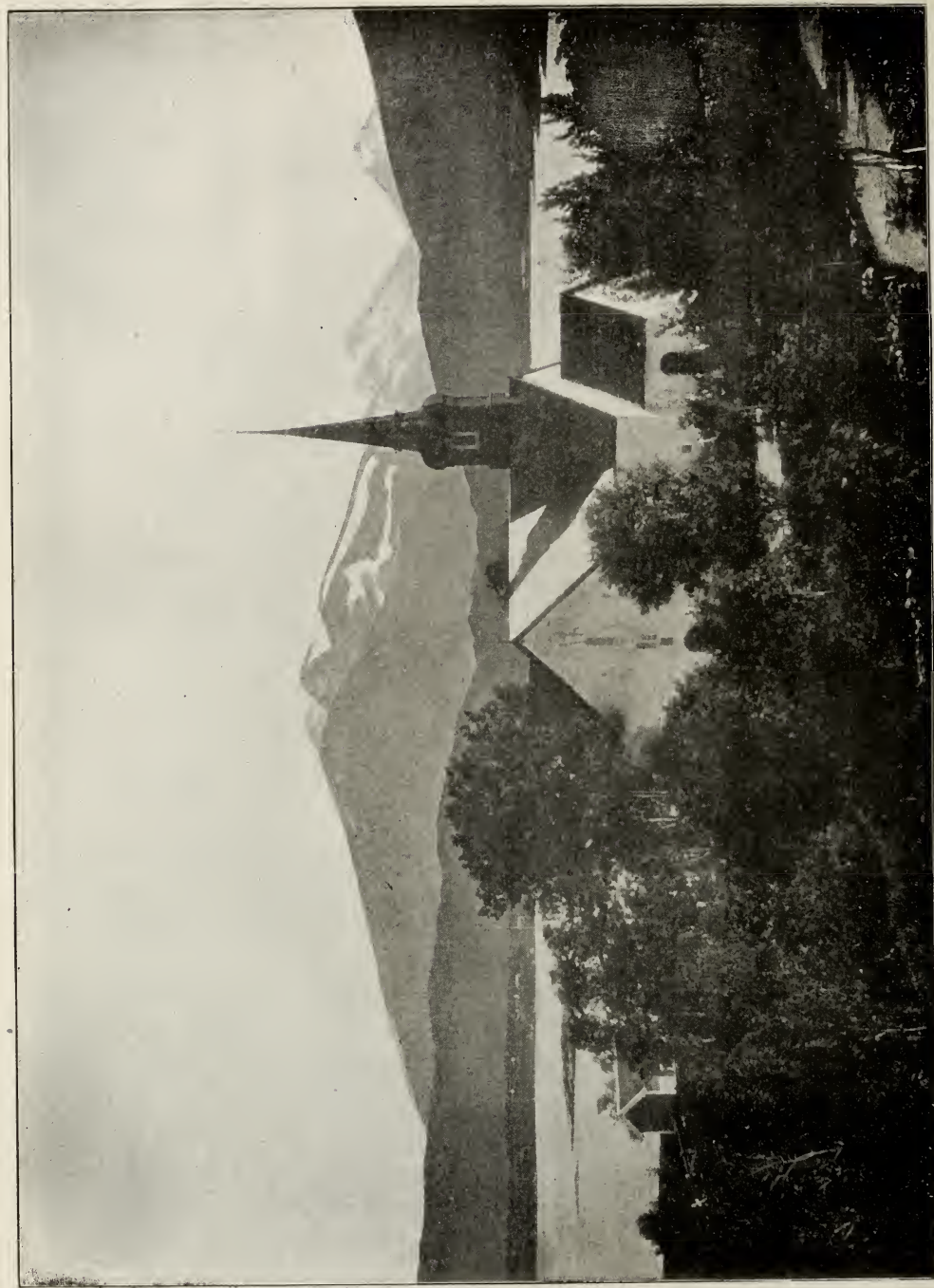
All the forenoon the wonderful pageant glides slowly by us. We now turn into the Nordangfjord, and at noon reach Oje, its terminus.

This little village occupies a low, grassy delta which contrasts oddly with the colossal peaks by which it is environed. Opposite the Hotel Union is a sublime waterfall, its top hidden in a cloud that lingers on the mountain. The delusion is perfect—the water appearing to *fall from the sky* in one grand plunge into the fjord!

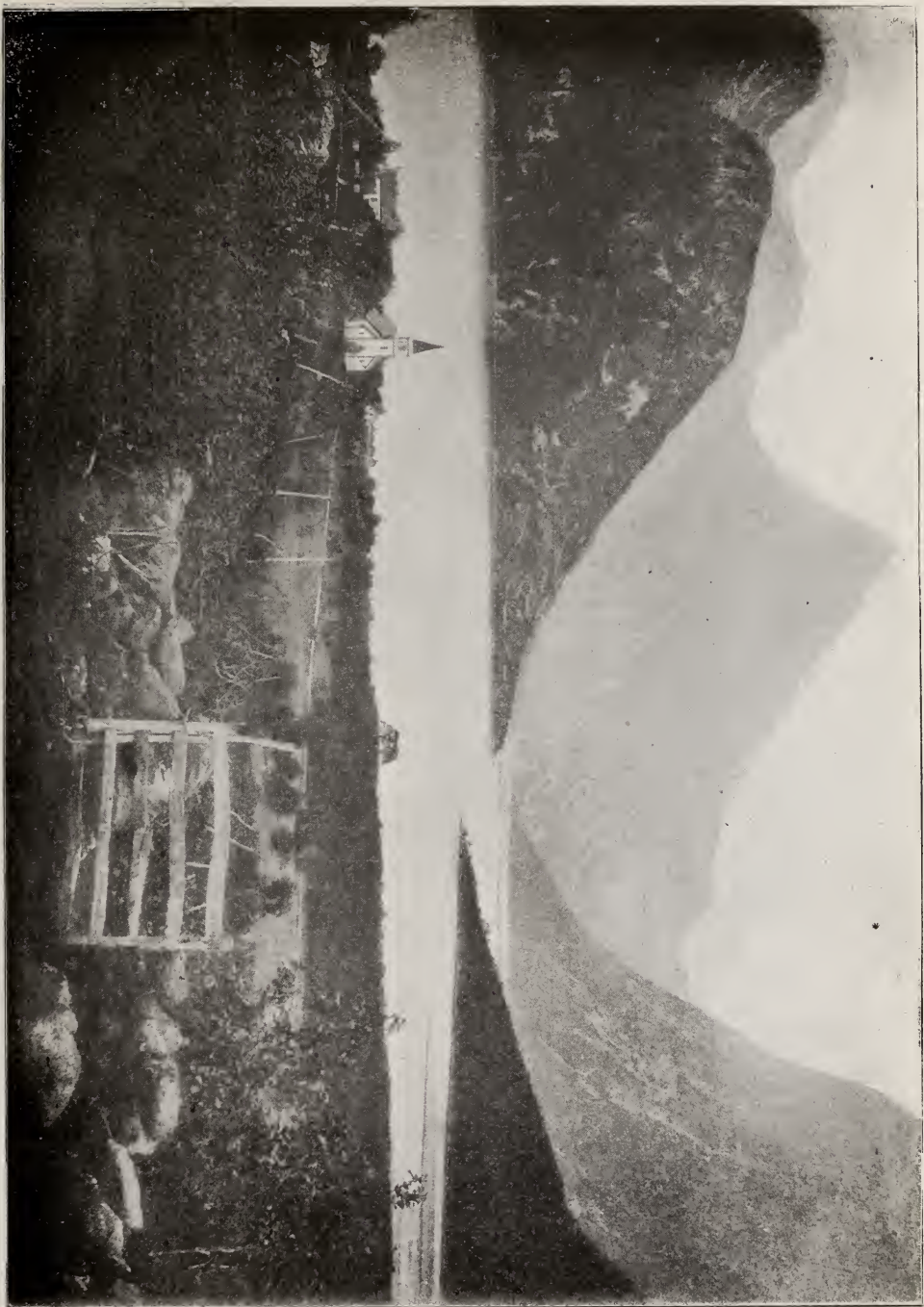
Over there on the other side, Slogen lifts its imposing crest 5,230 feet. Speaking of this Slingsby says: "It is one of the proudest peaks in Europe; climb to its summit; you will never obtain a finer view."

We should like to linger here for a week but time forbids; and, after a luncheon at the hotel, we engage a *stolkjaerre* and one of those hardy little ponies to take us to Hellesylt, lying on another fjord twenty miles east. A boy of about ten years mounts the driver's seat behind us, and away we go up the Nordang Valley. We anticipate much from this drive and are not disappointed.





OLD BORGUND CHURCH.



HJORUNDFJORD.





The Aalesund Tourist Association has built an elegant *chausse* through this mountain wilderness, so that travelers can now enjoy the scenery without fear of breaking their necks as in former times, when the crazy road on the opposite side of the river was in use.

Our road is flanked on either side by some of Søndmore's loftiest peaks. We gaze upward till our necks are weary and try to measure these dizzy heights which still have enough clouds encircling their summits to baffle our efforts, or to cause us to exclaim in admiration as one rears its head regally above them.

"What is the name of this giant?" we inquire of our small driver, who answers with stoic indifference, "Skruven."

We learn from our guide book that this and Kviteggen, a little farther on, are near 5,500 feet. As compared to the Alps and our Rockies, this is no great height; but let it be remembered that these mountains of Norway rise more than 5,000 feet, abruptly almost, from the ocean level, and the absence of foothills adds to their apparent heights.

The avalanche and landslide which are of frequent occurrence here, have left masses of broken rock on either side of our road. In several places the river flows underground for long distances, lost beneath the moss-grown debris.

The ravine grows narrower, and now our road lies close to the foot of a remarkable cliff—Staven. It is a long, frightful, perpendicular wall of smooth rock, *black as pitch*. It rises more than 4,000 feet above us, its appalling shadows sheltering from the sun's rays huge snowdrifts which lie at its base all the year round. Here, too, lies a dismal lake,



dark and chill looking. Our small boy informs us that it is full of fish. At the foot of Kviteggen we find a hotel, the only habitation in the valley except saeter houses built from logs and stones in the hillsides to prevent their being carried away by the landslide. Truly, the seater girls who must spend much of their time here, are not to be envied.

As we cross the divide and enter the Nebbedal, we are on a slight down grade, and our little pony trots faster—too fast, as we whirl close to the verge of the Sunelv canon, the river foaming with many cascades far below us, till it leaps with one mad spring into the fjord, and Hellesylt bursts into view.

This place is noted for its two large, rival hotels and its cheerless situation. The bleak, bare cliffs on every side are too close, shutting it in as if in a chilly prison. But a good supper is placed before us, and, wearied though delighted with our day's journey, we retire to comfortable beds, the Sunelv falls near our window lulling us to sleep with their monotone.

Rested and refreshed, we are rowed out on the fjord the following morning to meet the steamer Romsdal. With ten or more other passengers, we step into a large flat-bottomed row-boat. All are seated, but the sturdy boatman refuses to move from the shore until a fee of "20 ore" is collected from each passenger. After some mistakes and merry confusion, the silver is all in the boatman's hat at last, and we move slowly out to the waiting steamer. Steps are lowered from her deck, and we climb on board.

We steam northward in the face of a chill breeze. "Not a very pleasant day this to see the fjords," remarks an Eng-





NEBBEDAL.



NORDANGSFJORD.





lish lady as she draws her heavy wrap closely about her and seeks refuge in the little deck-cabin. But in a few minutes we turn eastward into the far-famed Geiranger fjord, and at once are in calm water. The wind has no effect in this narrow ravine. New delights are in store for us. How shall I describe this fjord?

“Always were there newer seas,  
Newer mountains, newer leas,  
Hid behind each elfin-door;  
Always what before I praised,  
Now in fairer light was raised,  
Grander, lovelier than before!”

The Geiranger is one of the narrowest of Norway's fjords—a stray arm of the ocean which has ventured farther than the rest, into the very heart of the mountain fastnesses. No green valleys can be seen, and it is not varied and beautiful like the Hardanger, nor broken and fantastic like the Hjørung; but its nearly perpendicular walls are so high that, in grandeur, it may be said to surpass either of those. In places the cliff hangs out over the water. We mount to the hurricane deck and gaze directly upward.

Is that a human habitation up there on the edge of that dizzy cliff? What could induce sane persons to live in a place like that, and how did they ever get up there? Like an eagle's nest on a shelf of rock, is a cottage with a barn near it; above, rocky heights; below, the abyss—a sheer descent of 820 feet down to the depths!

On the opposite side of the fjord is another house 800 feet above us. These mountaineers depend mainly on their cattle, sheep and goats for a living. With ropes tied around their waists to prevent falling, they gather every tuft of grass growing in the clefts and on steep mountain sides.

Little children are "staked out"—tied to the house with long ropes, that they may not wander to the awful verge. The dead are lowered down to boats by ropes, or carried down a desperate wooden stairway fastened to the rock. One shrewd peasant living here, when he knows that the tax-collector is coming, simply pulls up the ladder which forms the top of his stairway, and is "*not at home*." He is "beyond the reach of the law" in a literal sense, and we think he deserves to be.

Farther on, several other houses have found foothold on the cliff, and are surrounded by small patches of green. It is amusing to notice how every bit of soil is utilized.

Our steamer glides on slowly and quietly, as if it, too, feared to disturb the holy hush which pervades this sacristy of God's temple. "The strength of the hills is his also." . .

We are closer in touch with the heart of nature than we have ever been before. Instinctively, every voice is hushed; speech seems out of place as our boat slows up close to the cliff where The Seven Sisters—magnificent sister cataracts, fall 800 feet from the verge above! Their spray drives over our deck, and, in the spring freshet, we are told, it is driven way across to the opposite shore.

Here is a peculiar cliff which harmonizes well with the majesty of its surroundings. At a distance it has the appearance of a child's face; but on nearer approach, it grows older till it shows the wrinkled face of an old man. It is called "St. Olaf's Face." Opposite The Seven Sisters is the tall Pulpit with its level surface.

Into Merok at the head of the fjord, we sail, where a large hotel is situated high up among the rocks and foaming





GEIRANGERFJORD.





GEIRANGERFJORD.





rapids. Though it beckons us invitingly to remain and explore, and though Knuten just behind it promises rare prospects from its summit, we must forego these pleasures and sail back again.

Back over the unbroken mirror which reflects the giant walls in its unknown depths. How frightfully deep down the summits appear with a rift of blue sky between them! The bare thought of "falling down there" makes our flesh shrink just as it used to do, when, in our childhood, we looked into a puddle to see how far down the tree tops were.

For several hours after leaving Geiranger, we sail northward down the Storfjord. We have long since tired of counting the waterfalls. The passing scenery gradually grows milder, till, late in the afternoon, we reach Orskau which lies in a warm valley sloping southward. Broad level fields and luxuriant woods are here, in strong contrast to the stern landscapes which we have viewed lately.

And here in the road is a mud-puddle, the only one we have seen in Norway! We view it with emotion, for it reminds us strongly of old familiar paths in our Wisconsin home. The birch and poplar trees, too, look familiar. We take a short rest and fancy ourselves at home; but we must up and on, for we are bound for Vestnes on the Romsdalfjord, and forty-two kilometers of mountain country intervene.

Seated again in a *stol-kjaerre*, we are carried swiftly over bleak, bare heights with scattered saeter houses, then down through a fruitful valley to Vestnes.

We have now seen Sondmore—a chaos of tumbled mountains, ocean depths, gleaming snows and foaming torrents, created as if in the freak of a moment. For ages

it has lain here in its virgin simplicity, accessible to no stranger but the hardy hunter or the daring angler; but year by year the stream of summer tourists is increasing, robbing it of some of its charm. The puffing steamer, the elegant carriage, the modern hotel, seem like strange intruders 'mid scenes like these.

It has been asked, "Are not the people of this region all poets and artists?"

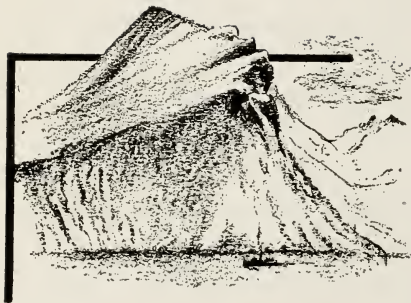
Strange to say, they are not. The peasants have not been taught to see the beauties and wonders of their environment, though I think all have an intuitive, undefined love of nature. The better educated, however, fully appreciate the glories which surround them, and love their home-land with a jealous passion. They wish the world to come and admire, but would fain cry, "Hands off! Not too close!" fearing that travel and business routes will desecrate that *untouched wildness*—that purity and loneliness of nature which is its great charm.

Kristofer Randers, Sondmore's poet, prophesied years ago that the public would claim his home. He then sought to express the feelings of its people in the following quaint and touching lines:

TO THE HJORUNGFJORD.

"Yet I know the time is coming,  
Dreams of innocence all ended,  
When, into the stream of travel,  
Slowly, surely, you'll be whirled;  
When a steamship route is laid  
With its freights and greed of gain,  
By your proudest mountain walls;  
When hotels of haughty grandeur,  
Their alluring snares shall rear

Where the lowly cottage stands.  
Easy, then, 'twill be to travel  
For the eager, sight-seeing throng!  
But we love you better now,  
When the best that you can offer  
Is coarse fare in simple bowl,  
For our couch, a sheepskin spread;  
When but snowy sail and oar,  
Glide along thy crystal floor,  
And around thy rocky grandeur  
Nature's Sabbath-stillness rests!"



## CHAPTER IX.

### IN THE ROMSDAL.

We remained at Vestnes long enough to learn that it is worthy of Sondmore. Its fields and groves of green are set against a background of granite and snow.

In the morning I brought out my camera and sought to take a view of it; but how unsatisfactory the result! I could not transfer to paper that hazy distance, those exquisite tints of coloring, the light and life of it all.

Nowhere, perhaps, more than in Norway does the artist feel the poverty of his pencil and his brush. While sailing up the Hardanger, an English artist opened his portfolio and showed us a number of Norwegian scenes in water-color. I was struck with the richness of their coloring. "They are not bright enough," said he. "I cannot get colors rich enough to paint these Norse coast scenes."

The Rauma glided swiftly over the blue Romsdalfjord, passing the city of Molde, indistinctly seen on the north. The fjord is wide, but narrows gradually towards the twin villages of Nes and Veblungsnes.

Here, between curiously shaped mountains—ragged peaks and rock-strata hurled by some giant force edgewise

into the sea, begins the historic Romsdal. This valley is travel-worn, being a part of the natural overland route between the west coast and Christiania.

In this spot landed the ill-fated Col. Sin Clair with his small army of Scots in the year 1512, intending to march overland, lay waste the interior, and join the Swedes on the southern coast. Sweden being at war with Norway at the time, Col. Sin Clair was hired by the enemy to devastate the country at a time when only old men and boys were at home to defend it.

At Nes a peasant was seized and compelled to act as guide. This he did, but led the invaders in a round-about way, by difficult mountain paths, and contrived to send ahead warning of their approach. At night a bonfire blazed up from a hill-top. It needed no interpreter. The people understood it. "Enemies are approaching from the north. Arise and defend your homes!" Soon

it was answered by another signal higher up the valley. Another, and still another shone out, till the warning lights formed a chain through the heart of the country.



VEBLUNGSNES.



But what could women, gray haired men and young boys do against a force of strong men? Fire and bloodshed marked the path of the pitiless Scots. Then the peasants gathered, and, as it were, drew strength from their very weakness. They determined to destroy the invaders. Their axes were sharpened till their edges were as keen as possible; then they shouldered them, and assembled on a steep hill in Guldbrandsdalen, under which the enemy must pass. Here they felled trees and tied the great logs with ropes on the brow of the hill in such a way that when they were loosened they would be precipitated on the road below. Rocks were fastened in the same way. Close to the other side of the road lay the river; on the opposite side of this, a girl rode back and forth on a white horse. She was placed there to watch for the enemy, and to give a signal when they should be directly under the trap.

On came the unsuspecting foe with their Norse guide. He and a few of the foremost warriors had passed the danger, when the white horse stood still. The music of the girl's *lange-lur* was wafted across the river. Then the sharp axes above cut the ropes, and the awful avalanche of rock and logs swept down. The destruction was complete, most of those who were not crushed at once being hurled into the river and drowned.

The forty men who escaped immediate death were afterward taken prisoners and shot with their own firearms. It is said that when the girl who gave the fatal signal had done her part, she threw herself from her horse and, face downward on the earth, wept aloud, shutting from her eyes the terrible sight.

The story of "Sin Clair's raid" is graphically told in verses of which the closing lines are:

"And never a single soul returned  
To Scotland's shores, recounting  
How dangerous 'tis to visit those  
Who dwell 'mid Norway's mountains "

A monument marks the place where the Scots fell. Farther on, another stone marks the grave of their inglorious leader. It bears this fierce inscription:

"Woe to the Norseman who grows not wroth  
Whenever this stone beholding."

The insignificant little hamlet of Veblungsnes has viewed many foreign dignitaries—kaisers, princes, lords and high-born ladies, all bound up the valley to behold its wonders. Here the river Rauma glides placidly into the fjord, never betraying the mad turmoil through which it has passed higher up the valley. It is a deep, swift stream—a favorite haunt of the salmon, also the English angler who may be seen day after day, casting his line along its banks.

We drove along the river for several miles, and soon the grand old Romsdal Horn was looking down upon us. Its horn-shaped peak lifts its head majestically above its fellows. And—favored personages that we were! Our driver stopped at a queer-looking stone house at the very foot of the peak and announced: "The residence of Knut Hole." Here, then, we were to remain for some time. We had not hoped to live so near to the most famous mountain in Norway. Well might we be envied, for there is no hotel in this interesting spot, and the thousands of tourists must content themselves with driving by.

Grateful for our distinguished privilege, I entered the



low, open door. A stout, motherly woman, gray and wrinkled, stood near the fireplace in a large room. Extending my hand, I apologized for the intrusion by saying:

“I come

from Chicago, and bring greetings from your son.”

Her look of surprise changed to one of joy, and the tears filled her eyes as she said: “It must be Daniel! I don’t



ROMSDAL HORN.

know whether to laugh or cry to see some one who has spoken to my boy!"

Her boy still—sixteen years ago he left the home-roof in the lordly valley, never to return. Family duties claim him in the busy city; and the patient old mother hails gladly every letter from her boy which tells that he is true to her. She does not expect to see his face again on earth; but "The secret of the Lord" is hers, and the years seem



GRANDMA IN THE FIRE-LIGHT ROASTING COFFEE.



short to her now. Her faith looks forward to the time, soon coming, when "There shall be no more sea," dividing.

Need I say that we were made welcome? The frank hospitality of these people was good to behold.

"How thankful I am" said the old lady, "that I hired a girl to scrub my floor yesterday, though I did not know that you were coming."

A small white cloth was spread on one end of the long, scoured, pine table, and coffee and refreshments were placed there for us.

What a charmingly quaint old house it was! The rough stone walls had stood for a century and a half; and as they were three feet in thickness, the window-sills were of a remarkable depth. The rafters of the low ceiling were not far above our heads. Over the old fireplace our food was cooked, giving it the additional spice of romance. Each piece of furniture was a curiosity—the home made tables and benches, cross-legged—the ancient cupboard, splendidly painted with many colored flowers—the *himmel-seng*, an old bed with high head and footboards supporting a sloping roof, blue-painted to represent the canopy of heaven.

At the other end of the house lived a married daughter with her family. On the floor above was the guest-chamber which was assigned to us with the information that "wise men and great—even members of the national *storting* (congress)" had occupied that same room.

This chamber had a painted floor, an old-fashioned bed, two chairs, a washstand, and a round table with a bright spread. The walls were ornamented with pictures from Chicago. The two wide, curtainless windows faced the dark



mountain wall which rose beyond the river. The summit of this mountain has a number of curious rocky spires with round heads standing up against the sky. They resemble a company of women, some sitting, others standing, and are called *Troldtindene* (Witches' Peaks).

These women were at one time (so says a legend) members of a gay bridal party. While crossing the mountain, they were overtaken by a jealous hag who bewitched the whole party and turned them into stone. These witches of the peaks, with their warning fingers held aloft, looked down upon us all night through the bare windows.

Those were quiet, restful days in the romantic place. The house occupied a green, alluvial flat with a fringe of trees along the river. It was haying time; and, as the season had been unusually wet, the tardy days of sunshine were very busy ones. All hands excepting "grandma" were at

work in the meadow, and we were left to amuse ourselves. Vida sketched and I helped rake hay; or, seated on a huge



A GLIMPSE OF THE RAUMA.

boulder nurlled at some remote time from the cliff, drank in the glory of my surroundings in deep draughts of delight, anon looking up at the towering Romsdal Horn with a vain desire to stand on its crest. Few men have scaled it.

While seated there, within one hour, eighty-three vehicles passed, carrying tourists up the valley. Little Bjorne, the four-year-old baby of the family, excited by the imposing spectacle, stood on the bank by the roadside as the carriages passed, swinging his cap and shouting "Hurra!" at the top of his small voice. His cheers were answered by coins and bonbons thrown to him by the amused strangers.

Our host was a powerfully built old man of eighty—a true son of "*Gamle Norge*." Many were his reminiscences of younger days when there was no railroad, and he took travelers over the mountains to Christiania. With a cheerful disposition, a keen sense of the humorous, and a thorough



RESIDENCE AND FAMILY OF KNUT HOLE



ONE OF A THOUSAND.





knowledge of the country—its every path, and hut, and point of interest, I doubt not that he was the best of guides. Even now he should have enjoyed driving with us down to Otta, where we wished to get the train for the south. Owing to his advanced age, however, it was not thought best; but his son-in-law agreed to take us there as soon as most of the hay should be in.

And so, one afternoon, the little brown pony, Bruna, was hitched to the *stol-kjaerre* and our baggage securely strapped on behind, after which the whole family stood in front of the house to have their pictures taken. Then with a parting handshake, we left the little cottage and its inmates never to be forgotten.

Our road, elegant as a boulevard, wound about the foot of the Romsdal Horn, on the other side of which we came to a small lake. Over this a stone bridge has been built—a stately structure, with its curbs of massive granite blocks.

We could not but notice the beautiful grain and coloring of these rocks and thought how fine they would be, polished. All the way up the valley our road was flanked by great masses of the finest stone. What a pity it seemed that all this choice building material could not be utilized!

Through its whole length this grand valley is alive with interest. We followed the river Rauma for about sixty miles of its course, and found it a most entertaining stream—the wildest, maddest of torrents. Now and again it would surprise us by a higher leap over some precipice, or lash itself to a frenzy through some narrow defile or over obstructing boulders, often hidden under them to appear again in many channels. Countless falls from the mountains on either side



swell its waters. Many of these are of great height and volume, but we soon ceased to ask their names. Several were continually in sight. They fall at almost every angle, and in one place we saw two of these cataracts *fall upward!* The river here broadens out into a lake extending to the foot of the cliff. Into this lake plunge two superb waterfalls, reflected in their full height in the mirror below. The reflection is so perfect that, were it not for the law of gravity, you might mistake the sheets of silver foam rushing upward, for the falls themselves.

This road is not without its dangers. In several places we noticed light-colored patches high up on the face of the gray cliff, showing where masses had loosened to fall crashing down on the road below. In one place our road had been completely buried by these broken rocks.

The avalanche, too, is a dreaded visitor here in the spring. A laborer in the Romsdal related the following incident:

“One day I called at a cottage a short distance up the valley to buy a lunch of bread, milk and cheese. There were five persons in the house—a man, woman and three children. I ate, placed the money for the food on the table, and went away; but had not been gone more than two or three minutes when, hearing an awful roar behind me, I turned, only to see an avalanche plunge down the mountain and sweep the cottage which I had just left into the river. All its inmates perished. My feelings can better be imagined than described.”

Higher and higher we climbed, each turn of our road unveiling new wonders. The first way station reached was

Horhjem where lived the great house-cat, "Mons Horhjem," made famous by the pen of Edna Lyall. An hour's rest, and we resumed our journey, reaching Stueflaaten towards evening. This is said to be the finest station on the route. Emperors, kings and princes have graced it with their presence. Several years ago, three unostentatious German princes came to Stueflaaten in plain citizen's dress, the people never suspecting their high rank. The story was told us in detail thus:

"The princes had three small clay pipes which they lit, and then sat down so cozily on the ledge of the fireplace in the kitchen to smoke and to chat with Marit as she prepared supper. On the following day they left their names and royal titles in the register and departed, leaving the good people of the inn to recover from their surprise, perhaps mortification, on learning what distinguished guests they had entertained in this pleasant but unceremonious way."

It was here, too, that Stoddard and his friend found the rocking-chairs into which they sank with such outspoken delight.

Stueflaaten is truly an ideal place of rest for tired travelers. We found every comfort here.

The hotel appears to be on an elevation with the mountain tops that stretch away, white, wild and free, on every hand. There is an exhilarating sense of freedom in this broad prospect, and if any of the dust and cares of the nether world still cling to you, these spicy, pine-laden breezes will soon blow them away.



## CHAPTER X.

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### OVER THE DOVREFJELD.

'I wonder what there will be to see  
Over the lofty mountains.  
Will there nothing but white snow be?  
Round me stands the greenwood tree,  
But I long to be over yonder!  
When shall I venture, I wonder.

The eagle rises on strong, free wing  
Over the lofty mountains,  
Rows in the strength of the sun's young rays,  
Feeding his courage in the wild chase,  
Sinks where he will to rest,  
Eyeing the foreign coast.

The leaf-laden apple-tree cares not what lies  
Over the lofty mountains;  
It buds as the summer is drawing near,  
Then waits to bud another year;  
All its birds it is swinging,  
But knows not what they are singing.

He that, for twenty years, has longed  
To be over the lofty mountains,  
He that knows he cannot attain,

Strength, now weakness, wishes vain,  
Knows what the bird is singing,  
While so trustfully swinging.

Tale-telling bird! What would you here  
From over the lofty mountains?  
Over there is a better nest for thee,  
A broader view and a higher tree.  
Did you come here to bring  
Longing, but never a wing?

Forth, I will! forth! Yes, so far, far, far!  
Over the lofty mountains!  
Here is all so weary, and crushing and close,  
My courage is young and strong, it knows,  
Let it the climb undertake,  
Not 'gainst the cliff wall-break.

Some day I know I shall reach my goal  
Over the lofty mountains!  
Perchance thy door is already ajar,  
Lord, my God! thy home is fair,  
But yet awhile close the gate!  
Yet awhile let me long and wait!"

—Bjornstjerne Bjornson.

Leaving Stueflaaten to the fortunate ones who could remain and explore at leisure those beckoning hills, we drove on, up the Dovrefjeld range. A short distance above the hotel, the Rauma receives so many tributaries from all sides that it grows distracted, not knowing which way to flow. For a long distance it is a confused tangle of swift streams, falls and seething rapids, flowing this way and that, backwards and around islands in splendid perplexity.

Then we came to Lesjeskogen—lonely heights, nearly level, with long stretches of pine forests. Again, the country grew more fruitful, the houses closer. Only the way stations, however, which we found about ten miles apart, showed any attempt at beauty or comfort. The

cottages here were the poorest that we had seen, most of them barn-like huts with small windows, their roofs covered with yellow turf, or clay which the rain had washed down the walls in muddy streaks.

At noon we stopped for refreshments and a long rest at the neat and cosy station, Holset, then on again. We had now lost sight of the Rauma. On the divide we paused to take a long look backward, while Vida made a hurried sketch of a lonely little church among the firs. Then we looked southward, over yet unexplored vistas of gray and green. Miles and miles of fir and pine, while in the distance on all sides, fields of eternal snow bounded the vision. How still it was! We missed the companionship of the noisy river, but were soon compensated by finding another, the Laugen, hurrying southward.

For hour after hour we moved on through the uninhabited solitude. Were we tired? Yes, somewhat, and occasionally walked to get rested. We now looked down on a pine clad valley. On the heights which rose beyond it, we noticed a small white speck.

"That is Hotel Domaas," said our driver.

It was a welcome sight; and this haven of rest we reached at six in the afternoon.

Domaas stands in the wilds of the Dovrefjeld in the heart of the country, and its surroundings are all that could be desired. We found the spacious buildings crowded with guests—French, German and English. Children romped and shouted on the hillside, and parties of ladies were returning merrily from rambles along the river. Gay young



cavaliers in hunting costumes were returning from a day's chase of the fleet-footed reindeer which inhabit these wilds.

Here was the height of civilization and refinement amid the wildest of nature. The dining table might please the most fastidious. There were a variety of German and English dishes as well as the inevitable cheese and flatbrod, this latter seeming to please the foreigners by its novelty. The large parlor with its shining, varnished floor, was richly furnished in modern style. Entering into conversation with an English gentleman and his wife, Vida spoke of the elegance and comfort of this hotel.

"Yes," was the reply; "but we foreigners would prefer something plainer, not English but Norse. We should enjoy a peasant cottage with its furniture, dishes and fare. When we come to Norway we wish to see how her people live."

ON THE DIVIDE.



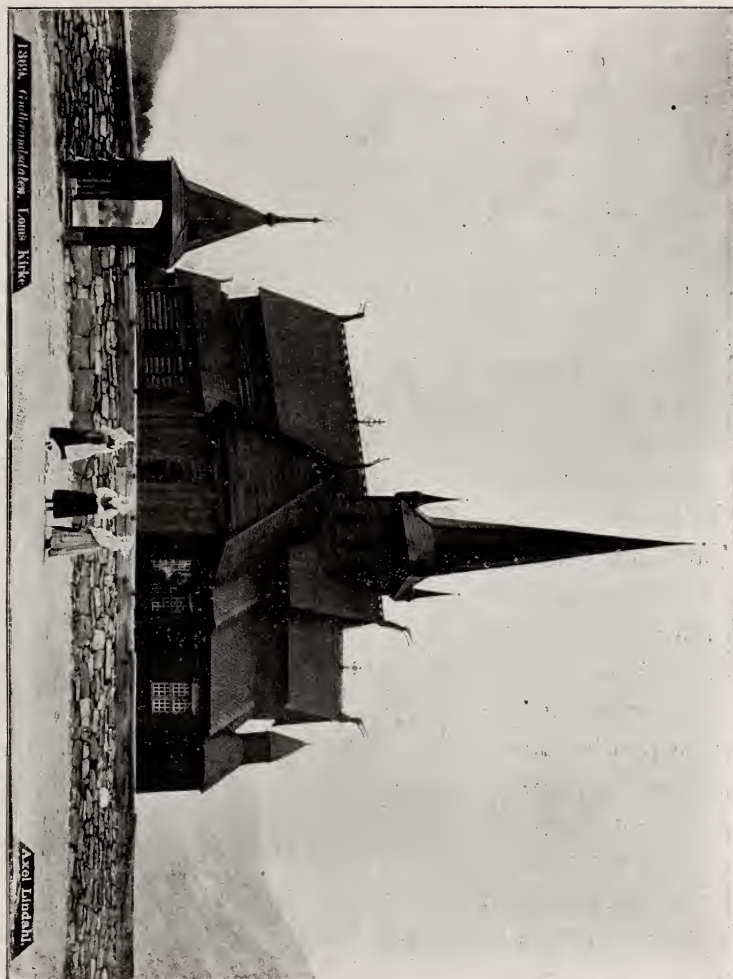
We could not but sympathize with them in this; and I foresee a fortune for some enterprising Norwegian who shall erect a number of old-fashioned cottages in these mountains, furnish them wholly in peasant style and hang out the sign—"Bondestuer for Reisende" (Pleasant Cottages for Travelers.) Ah! not all have the honor of being acquainted with Knut Hole!

In the broad hall we found reindeer antlers and other curiosities for sale, and Vida obtained a coveted pair of antlers *to carry home to Wisconsin*. Think of it!

We left this charming resort with reluctance. The precious antlers were tied to the back of the *kjaerre*, and our jocose driver would sometimes startle us by exclaiming that one or both of them had dropped off and were lost.

To the west of us towered the broken ranges known as Jotunheim. Galhøpiggen, the highest peak in Norway, rises from among them to the height of 8,000 feet. This Jotunheim with its everlasting glaciers, is rightly named "The Home of the Frost Giants." The gentle Balder has not yet conquered their icy kingdom; and you half expect to see, looming up to the sky, the impregnable castle of Utgaard Lake whither the formidable Thor sometimes journeyed to try the strength of Mjölner.

Among these mythical mountains lies the rural village of Lom, father's birthplace. At the age of sixteen, and shortly after he had seen his father buried near the wall of the old church, he left home to seek his fortune on the coast. As the years passed, the other members of the family were scattered, and the ancient homestead is occupied by strangers now, who gazed rather disdainfully at the unknown visitor,



1898. Gauthier and others. Lom Church.

Axel Lundh.

OLD CHURCH AT LOM

a pale-faced old lady, who walked up to the door with the request:

"May I look through the rooms of the house? It was my childhood's home, you know; and, while on my way to Christiania, I thought I would stop and see it once more."

Yes, certainly, she might; but they did "not see what fascination there could be about an old house, anyway."

And yet, how akin to the human a dwelling has become, where loved ones have lived and laughed and wept!

The landscape took on a wilder aspect as we began the eastern descent of the range. Norwegian ponies have an unfortunate habit of running down hill at full speed. I say unfortunate, not because of any danger, for the smooth roads are everywhere carefully curbed and graded;

but you often miss the finest bits of scenery by this headlong speed.

We rushed down along a canon which the Laugen has cut for its waters. Part of our road was carved out of the



THE HUNNEFOS.



cliff-side—a mere shelf as it were, and dreadfully near to the edge of the canon; but the sure-footed little pony never slackened her speed. On either side of us rose a long slope, covered with a stately pine forest. What is more kingly than a tall pine tree? Like soldiers they stood, at regular distances, their straight, tapering trunks exposed, rising one above the other, up to the farthest sentinels outlined dark against the sky. Oh, it was a noble picture!

When we reached a little saw-mill and learned that it sawed, not logs, but *stone*, curiosity prompted us to stop. Klibberstone, a species resembling soapstone, is cut here in great quantities. It is fire-proof, close-grained, of a handsome, bluish gray color, and so soft that it can be sawed with a common hand-saw and carved as easily as wood. It is used for tombstones, gate and fence posts, and ornamental building purposes. At Otta, we noticed a finely-carved fire-place built of this Klibberstone.

Vida wished to buy a small block of it, from which to form a vase. The miller, with an amused twinkle in his black eyes, went into the mill to saw off the piece desired. In a minute he returned with two blocks of equal size, both of which he placed in our *kjærre*, refusing any pay for the stone or for his trouble. It was obvious that he felt compensated by the “joke” of carrying stone to America. With many thanks, we drove away, happier and heavier.

While passing a small house, four little girls, unkempt, ragged and barefoot, rushed out and ranged themselves by the road in order of size. They stared at us in such a half-starved way that I reached towards them some crackers, which the eldest eagerly seized with an emphatic “Tak da!”



(Thank you, then!) They were evidently used to this. The quick and orderly way in which they fell in line showed that they were well drilled. The sound of wheels was the signal for the array; and, with their tattered uniforms and serious faces, they made such a comical, woe-begone little army, that I have no doubt their mute appeal brought them many a coin from travelers on this important highway.

Beggars in this country are unknown except among the gypsies. During my stay of three months, alms were asked of me but once.

Now there were unmistakable signs of the approach of modern civilization—ugly slashes in the forest, and unsightly banks of clay piled along the canon, despoiling it of its fair birthright. All too soon, the bold, staring telegraph poles and railroad tracks told us that we were approaching Otta, and our pleasant ride must end. With regret we must change our *stol-kjaerre* for a commonplace car minus American comfort.

After all, what manner of travel can equal a drive in a comfortable carriage or even cart, if you please? With an obliging driver, there is such solid comfort in going as fast or as slowly as you wish, in stopping to rest when you feel inclined, to get a closer view of some exceptionally fine scene, or to examine some curiosity by the roadside. I shall ask for no greater enjoyment than another such ride through country equal in grandeur.

A few hours' rest, and we boarded our train for Christiania. Our honest driver, who had never before seen a railroad or an engine, thought he would take a ride too, just to see what it was like. Why not? His pony needed a

rest, so he reasoned, and this was the first time he had been so far from home. All things considered, he felt justified in indulging in this little extravagance. As we moved out from the station, he remarked with a smile:

“This travels faster than my old Bruna.”

At the first stop he bade us goodby and returned, leaving us with a grateful remembrance of his kindness.

Two-thirds of the distance to Christiania was yet to be traversed. The hoary mountain tops gradually disappeared, giving place to rolling green hills and fertile plains. Down hill after hill we sped, winding along the beach of Lake Mjosen. This is Norway's largest lake, a beautiful sheet of water of unusual depth. In summer most travelers prefer to take a steamer down the lake, which has a length of about eighty-four miles.

Like Switzerland, this country abounds in mountain lakes. A bird's-eye view of it from a balloon on a clear day would reveal hundreds of small lakes—dots of silver, sparkling amid the sombre gray of mountains, the deep green of forests, and the unsullied whiteness of snowfields.

On through Lillehammer and Hammer, not insignificant towns; through many pretty hamlets where children offered



cherries and raspberries for sale through the car windows, past farms, larger and more fruitful than any we had anticipated seeing here. All the southeastern part of the country is mild and beautiful, but tame as compared to the north and west.

We were, to say the least, weary when we reached our destination at midnight and took refuge in the nearest hotel.

## CHAPTER XI.

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### CHRISTIANIA.

I awoke next morning at a late hour and realized, first, that I was in the capital, and secondly, that the rain was pouring down in torrents. It next dawned upon me that the well-meaning maid had spoiled my very best shoes by trying to polish them. Our republican shoes never took kindly to Norway. In the first place, they were treated with ridicule by the heavier, clumsier, but perhaps more sensible Norse shoes; thereupon they flatly refused to take Norse polish. Though the maids siezed them and brushed away ever so conscientiously, they persisted in becoming gray and greasy and never regained their American lustre.

The moral is plain: American ladies traveling in Norway should carry their own shoe dressing.

Any little grievances were forgotten, however, in the all-absorbing thought, "Christiania lies before us." Sending for a carriage, we directed the driver to Schivesgade, 3, which he found after some difficulty. Here we received a hearty welcome to a home of comfort and affluence.

Our hostess had not yet returned from her summer outing on the mountains; but we had that long-looked-for meeting with "Tante Bastine." At sixty-six, she is still young looking, this worthy woman, though sorrow has left



LIEF

its traces in her brown hair and in the calm, chastened expression of her face. We felt at home at once in her society, and found her an interesting companion, well-informed and of refined tastes. She accompanied us to museums and art

galleries, and we spent many happy hours in her rooms, sunny, cozy rooms they were, on the second floor.

The richly furnished house contained many evidences of culture—good books, a piano, music by the best composers, and paintings exhibiting a high degree of art. The floors here, as in the best of Norwegian houses, were bare and heavily painted, while here and there lay a handsome rug. These floors were kept spotlessly bright, and nowhere was a speck of dust to be seen. Brooms, which in many parts of



TANTE BASTINE.



our country are still used so vigorously to "provoke the silent dust," are almost unknown in Norwegian houses. The dining room with its rows of silver on shelves around the walls, had some rare, old, high-backed chairs of beautiful workmanship. The backs and seats were upholstered in embossed leather, with floral designs in purple, pink, and gold.

Our hostess, on hearing of our arrival, sent her son Lief home from the mountains to entertain us until she should arrive. That was thoughtful. Lief was a frank, amusing, gentlemanly boy of fifteen years, and the best of entertainers we found him to be. On the morning after his return, he announced his intention of taking us to Holmenkollen to show us Christiania, declaring that we had not been able to see the city for the houses.

Holmenkollen is a pine-clad hill north of the city, the top of which has been fitted up as a pleasure-ground. An electric railway leads up to it, and high towers on its summit give a bird's-eye view of the city and surrounding country.

Here are several good restaurants, built in ancient and modern styles; but the chief attraction of the hill is a magnificent, new hotel where parties of tourists are entertained. It is built of hewn timber which is merely oiled, leaving the natural wood-color. The exterior is richly ornamented with dragon heads and quaint carvings of mythological suggestion.

We were admiring this striking piece of architecture, when Lief, whose boyish curiosity had got ahead of us, came running down a flight of steps, two at a time.

"Come in here!" he exclaimed excitedly. "Here is something terribly beautiful!"

We followed him to the door of a sitting-room and stood still with wonder. Lief's exclamation aptly described what we saw. It was both terrible and beautiful. Elves, trolls, witches and uncouth monsters were staring at us from all sides of the room!

The entire walls are composed of wood carvings with relief figures richly colored. They illustrate well-known stories of Norse folk-lore.

One wall is composed of a scene from "Mountain the Blue" The great bears are rowing the hero to their rocky citadel. An illustration of "The Wooer" covers another wall; while, on one side of the door, flying witches are almost within grasp of the frightened hero who is hammering at "The Door in the Mountain" seeking to escape their hideous, claw-like wings. The door leading into the next apartment is guarded on either side by a massive, grinning bear's head holding in its mouth a blood-stained key. Above the door is the quotation:

"Nordan under fjollo,  
Djupt under hello,  
Der leikar ded."

"Nordan under mountains,  
Deep under shelved rocks,  
There they play."

The very chairs and settees in this room are entwined by dragons, and, in fact, it is a room so weird that, once seen, it can never be forgotten.

Each room and each piece of furniture in the hotel is of antique style. The dining room has shelves and niches all



TOURIST HOTEL.

ting for which nationality it is intended.

☐ The Union Jack tells us that those sedate-looking ladies and gentlemen are Britons. The gay

around its walls, where are placed rare old china and other ware. It contains many small round tables, a silk flag on a staff in the center of each, indica-



SITTING ROOM TOURIST HOTEL.

party gathered around the Flag of the Fleur-de-lis are sipping their coffee amid laughter and a voluptuous flow of French. Near them the plain German colors are surrounded by a circle of hearty-looking tourists, while over there, the white cross on its scarlet ground has drawn around it a party of uniformed marines who drink their ale and chatter away in Danish. And here between the yellow cross of Sweden and the independent flag of Norway, "Old Glory" invites us to sit down and refresh ourselves beneath its inspiring folds.

Leaving the hotel, we walked through the woods to one of the observatory towers, and from its top, looked down over the pines to where the city lay spread out like a map before us—a beautiful, silent, slumbering city of air-castles. Its buildings, blue in the hazy distance, were scattered about the shores of its fjord and over its islands in dreamy array.

While our artist sketched away, "Tante Bastine" gathered a bouquet of berries and autumn leaves—a twig of brown burrs, yellow mulberry vines, red and brown leaves, and crimson, leafless twigs, arranging all with good taste and an eye to harmony of color. Meanwhile, Lief and I feasted on the blueberries which grew thickly under the trees. "Tante" must have something more substantial than these; so she led us all to the old-time cottage where the home-made furniture is nailed to the floor and walls. Floors, benches, tables and all were scoured as white as soap, sand and water could make them. While sitting on an open veranda enjoying a lunch of bread, butter and milk, Leif called our attention to this unique notice posted on the wall:





CHRISTIANIA FROM HOLMENKOLLEN

V. R. H. 609





"Visitors will please co-operate with us in seeing that this building is defaced by pencil-scribbling, cutting of walls and furniture, etc."

Some rogue had carefully cancelled the word *not*. The pernicious habit of defacing public property is not confined to America.

One side of Holmenkollen is utilized as a grand ski-slide. The trees have been cut away, and several "jumps" built on the steep hill-side. In winter this slide is alive with people, old and young, joining in the exciting sport, which is the favorite pastime of the country. It must indeed be a fine sight—these ski-runners on their thirteen-foot snow shoes, shooting like arrows over the "jumps," down the long slope and across the pond at its base. Women as well as men are fond of trying their skill at this feat, and many prominent ladies of the land are proficient ski-runners.

The principal park of Christiania lies on St. Han's Haugen, near the outskirts of the city. It is tastily fitted up, but is not above the ordinary. What attracted us most was a statue of Asbjornson, the children's author. It was he who wrote those funny Norse fables and brownie stories which the young enjoy so highly, and the children have erected this statue to his memory.

"We will let him sit on a rock," said they; "that is part of the nature which he loved so well, and we know he would prefer a rock to a chair."

So on a rock he sits, his benevolent features beaming with good humor—the very personification of content.

The city has a gallery of art of which it may well be proud. There are many notable works on canvas and in



SKI-RUNNING.

marble. Some of the masterpieces held our attention for hours and drew us back again.

There are several museums, also, where weeks might be spent with pleasure and profit. They contain collections of antique relics, each with a history of its own. Norway has awakened to the fact that these relics are valuable, also that foreigners have been rapidly carrying them out of the country, buying them from the innocent peasants for a mere song. Now, therefore, antiquarians are traveling through the length and breadth of the land, collecting articles of ancient date, and placing them in museums of the principal cities.

The craze for relics among foreigners verges on to the

ridiculous. In a shop we found an old cow-bell with holes rusted through it, and marked a fabulous price. Many a rustic has been made rich (so he thought) and happy by some enthusiastic lady who has pounced upon an old wooden spoon or carved horse-collar and carried it off in triumph.

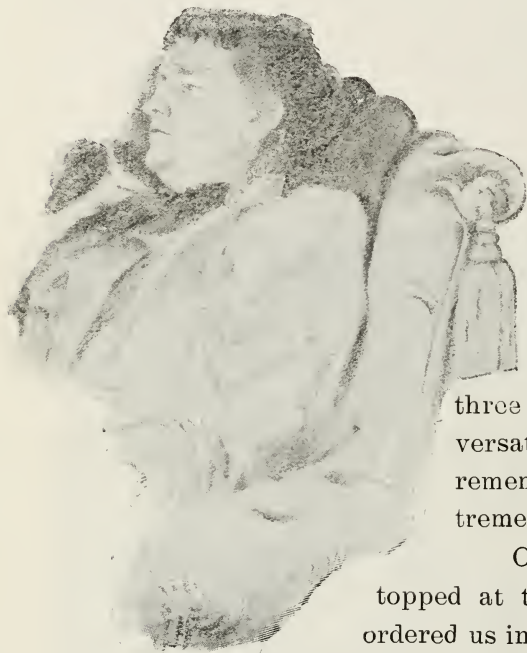
You would enjoy a walk through one of this city's souvenir shops, that is if your purse is of goodly proportions. The Norse peasant is a genius at wood-carving, and the most beautiful hand-carved articles, delicate as lace work, are offered for sale. You will covet that white-wood jewel-case with the airy ferns and scrolls, that mahogany sugar bowl with its stem of wooden filigree, that gorgeously painted work-box, and that ale-bowl carved in the form of a Viking ship.



NORWEGIAN WOOD-CARVING

Our hostess and her other boys had now returned.

Fru Haslund is a hearty, vivacious woman of broad sympathies—an authority on social matters of the country, and prominent in musical circles. We found her an exceptionally strong character, capable of managing a variety of important public as well as private matters with proficiency and ease. Her literary work does not lessen her geniality as a companion, nor does a lecture to be delivered hinder the patient training of her domestics.



Occasionally, of an evening, one of the boys tuned his voice to his mother's piano and gave us a standard Norwegian song. The hours spent with this highly intelligent lady and her three boys, in lively conversation, will always be remembered as hours of extreme pleasure.

One morning a carriage topped at the door, our hostess ordered us into it, and we drove off in state to Bygdö. This island which lies near the city, is the property of King Oscar, and is cared for in a manner worthy of his majesty. Here stands Oscar Hall, a stately building

OUR HOSTESS IN A REVERIE.



## CHRISTIANIA.

where the king frequently dines with his guests during his yearly three months' residence in Norway.

In this palace coronation robes, crown jewels, royal uniforms, arms, etc., are all exposed to the eye of the public. The interior, like that of the main palace in the city, does not bespeak that costly splendor which we have always associated with European royalty. Its furnishing is more than republican in its plainness, and tells, rather, of that economy which is a characteristic of the land.



GOL CHURCH.

weather-worn, gray color. Its singular architecture and sombre hue gave it a ghoulish appearance, and made me think of a heathen temple. We felt a little awed as we passed through the narrow doorway with serpentine carvings on the broad doorposts.

Among the fir groves which rise back of Oscar Hall we found several old buildings which the king has caused to be removed to his island. First of all, there is a remarkable church.

Gol church is eight hundred years old and has probably been coated with tar at one time to preserve the wood which now is of a dark,

It has but two small windows in the uppermost peak of the building, admitting a little light through stretched bladder; and there are no seats save one designed for a bridal pair.

I imaged the throng of half-pagan worshipers which once filled this room. They knelt on the floor with their backs to the flickering candles that stood on the dark altar.

The roof is supported by pillars carved with dragons which, in the uncertain light, add to the ghostliness of the place.

We entered a furnished peasant cottage such as is now found only in the remotest parts of the mountain districts. Its roofed bedstead, alcove, fireplace, cross-legged table and shining brass dishes were objects of interest; but more than all, a shield which hangs on the wall, and is said to be the identical one used by Harald the Fairhaired, Norway's first king.

Another hut, very rude, suggests barbarism. It was built in 1630 and is called a smoke-hut. We stooped down to enter the square door. There are no windows. On the center of the earth floor is a square stone platform about eighteen inches high. This was the fireplace. In the ceiling above it a hole served as a chimney. A great beam is fastened to the wall by one end in such a way that it can be swung over the fireplace, and a hook attached to this shows where the kettles used to be hung. Pine benches, cut and worn, are fastened to the log walls, while behind the table, is a "high seat," the seat of honor, reserved for guests only. It is raised a foot higher than the table. In two corners, are beds inclosed in boxes, each with an opening on one side

through which the intending sleeper crawled to his repose. The only movable piece of furniture is a block chair, and it would require no little strength to move that. It is a section of a log set endwise, and cut down to form a seat, back and arms.

Even this crude dwelling has its ornamental carvings.

The furniture and implements of the early Norsemen were of necessity all home-made. Everything was made strong and durable. Their mountains taught them that. Their styles of workmanship were entirely original, suggested only by nature around them, and by the imaginary beings with which they peopled land and sea. Southern learning and art had not lent them an idea, and there were few fac-similes. Each individual worked independently of another, following the trend of his own fancy. The most ordinary article of household use was often the most highly decorated. Without discrimination as to its use, the workman would go at the article in hand, and with his brush or knife, give vent to his weird but cherished beliefs in intricate and beautiful combinations of the real with the unreal.

Their environment has left its impress, too, on the character of the people. Hardy and enduring as their own hills, they can bear toil and privation without complaint; but they have a passionate love of liberty that chafes under restraint.

Norway's capital is clean and roomy, differing in this respect from many European cities. There is a pleasing sense of fresh air and elbow-room about it. Its streets are stone-paved and of a respectable width; its stores and public buildings, well built and up-to-date, although it boasts no "sky-scrapers" as do some of our American cities.

We visited a cooking school where daughters of some of the best families were learning the mysteries of the culinary art. Some of those pretty girls were prospective brides. The snowy kitchen caps were soon to give place to bridal veils, and the dainty fingers now stained with cherry juice would soon be encircled by wedding rings. Here they were putting the finishing touches to that accomplishment which is considered so essential for a Norse housewife.

As we were accompanied by our hostess who has published a standard cook-book, we were asked to sample jellies and other sweets which certainly did credit to pupils and instructor.

It is no longer thought to be a disgrace for daughters of the better class to work. On the contrary, it has become the fashion for the wealthiest to learn some profession or other self-supporting work; so there are found among them, telegraphers, artists, authors, clerks, teachers, etc.

Fru Nilson presides over one of the best private schools in the city. Having obtained her permission to visit it, we entered her office and were presented to a pleasant looking little lady, modestly attired in a black and white sateen dress. Her school has a force of about sixteen teachers.

She took us from room to room, all of which were neat and cozy though wanting in decorations; but what pleased us so much was the cheerful atmosphere of the school.

The pupils all greeted us as we entered, and then attended strictly to business, going on with the recitations as though enjoying them immensely. They expressed themselves freely, with self-confidence yet modestly. A primary class marched out on the floor, formed in line, and sang,

without any aid from the teacher, a little song, bravely and well; in another room, a small girl in the nature-study class was eagerly telling all about the polar bear; a class in botany was all alive with interest; in one room we found a German recitation, and in another they were reading English; in the manual-training room, a gentleman was giving a class of bright looking boys a lesson in carpentering.

Our impression of this able teacher and her school was most favorable, and we went away feeling that we should like to spend a week there.

Happiest days are fleetest, and our visit in Christiania drew rapidly to a close. With a goodly collection of souvenirs and many pleasant memories, we took passage on the *Excellencen*, which proved to be excellently built for rolling and pitching in a sea. We glided out through the beautiful, land locked harbor with the waning daylight, passing the home of the man of whom all Norway is proud—Dr. Frithjof Nansen—the man who planned a ship that withstood the severest pressure of the Arctic ice,—stood *alone* where man had never before stood, in latitude  $86^{\circ} 14'$ , within  $3^{\circ} 46'$  of the north pole,—gazed northward over the awful, endless stretch of broken ice, towards that hopeless goal which has lured so many to their death,—then turned his face towards home, where his Eva and baby Liv were waiting for him. The whole world knows how he did return, miraculously, almost, and rejoined the *Fram* at Tromsø.

He is a typical Norseman, and his tall, well-knit figure is seen in portrait all over the country.

Soon night dropped a curtain over all the fair landscape, and the lights of Christiania grew fainter in the distance. It



was now September, and in southern Norway the twilight nights of summer had given place to darker nights, more natural to us.

When we reached the open sea we found a severe storm raging, and, for a long distance, no friendly islands to shelter us. Then it was that the *Excellencen* belied her name; but I will not dwell on the hours that followed; some things cannot be adequately told in words. I will leave it all to the imagination of the sympathizing reader and hurry on to something pleasanter.

## CHAPTER XII.

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### SUNNY VOYAGES.

Behold us again in quiet waters near a coast of forest-clad bluffs. Long, low islands of naked rock protect us from the rolling swells which the subsiding storm has left. For miles and miles these natural breakwaters run parallel with the southern coast, leaving a safe channel within, deep enough for the largest ships.

This is pleasant. Here, nestling under the bluff, is the city of Kragerö. There is a charm about the name which carries me back to "the days of auld lang syne."

I see again a pioneer home in the woods of Wisconsin—a log house with a great, open fireplace, and a group of little girls seated on the floor in the firelight. Near us in a low chair sits a dear old lady friend, rocking herself to and fro as she talks. She tells fable after fable and fairy tales of witches, trolls, giants, brave knights and fair maidens, till we glance half fearfully at the shadows in the corners of the room, or interrupt her with a laugh and the declaration, "It isn't true!" But we listen intently to the next fable, and the next, and to the never-ending stories which she tells of her home in far-off Kragerö.

For several hours we glided on through the smooth channel, occasionally passing a door in the barrier through

which we saw the white surf outside, and repeated involuntarily, "What a blessing these reefs are!"

The Excellencen stopped opposite Tvedestrand, which lies hidden on its fjord far inland. Here we found a ridiculous little steam yacht with the significant name "Smart," waiting to take the passengers ashore. We were bound for Eidbo, and, luckily, the "Smart" knew of a shorter route to that place than by way of Tvedestrand. "I will land you at Sagesund," said she, and shortly touched her bow to a small wharf which was on a level with her deck, making it an easy matter to step ashore.

A solitary woman stood on the wharf with an inquiring look. Were we the visitors sent to her by her uncle in America? Then right welcome we should be. As we walked up the hillside, she informed us that the infirm old relative whom she had lived with and cared for so many years, had passed away the day before. Emancipated from every earthly want and frailty, he would never need the little gift which I had brought him from over the sea.

Karen was left all alone now. She led us to her small house so snug and quiet, with nothing but the ticking of the clock to interrupt its Sabbath-like stillness.

Next day the funeral was held. Owing to the narrow hallway of the house, the coffin had been placed in a neighbor's barn. It had a high sloping cover, completely hidden by wreaths and bouquets of flowers sent by sympathizing neighbors. Juniper twigs had been strewn on the doorstep and on the road leading from the house. The rain fell heavily, yet there was quite a gathering in the large airy barn. The pastor not being able to attend, the school-master officiated

during the simple funeral rites. Then the casket with its burden of flowers was placed on a flat, open cart, where the rain was allowed to refresh with its teardrops the drooping blossoms, as the old man was carried slowly to his resting-place.

A number of the men who had assisted at the funeral were invited to the house after returning from the cemetery, and refreshments were served to them. The small sitting-room would not contain more people, but their wives were invited to come to "coffee" next day.

Though it continued to rain, ten or twelve women arrived in the afternoon. All of them were sailors' wives, some of their husbands sailing their own ships to distant lands. Several of these women had been on long cruises, and could tell interesting stories of Spain, Africa, Brazil and the West Indies. The afternoon passed away pleasantly and profitably in spite of the dull weather.

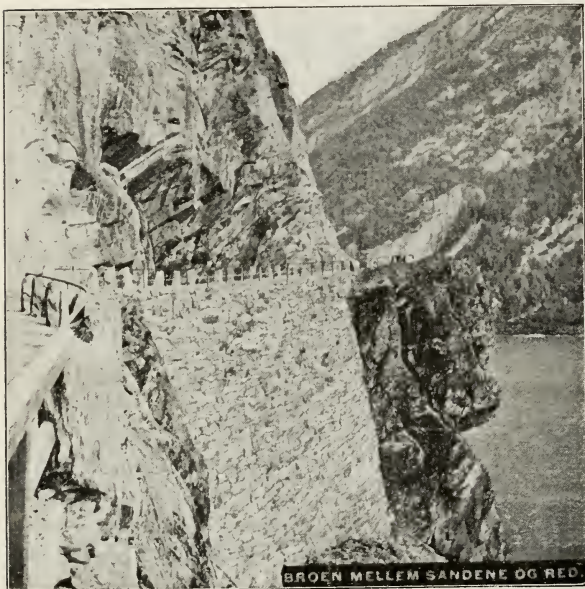
A few miles from Eidbo, lived a gentleman called by his neighbors "The American," owing to the fact that he had spent a score or more years of his life in that country. Under a clear blue sky, we drove over to his house. The surprise and delight of the good man and his wife you may imagine when they found that we were friends from America. The old lady had more questions than she could ask in the limited time of our visit, for American associations still hold a warm place in her heart.

"Yes, and we have *pie*, too," said she, knowing that this would be good news to us. That tempting viand is generally unknown both by name and nature in Norway, and, naturally, we had missed it, having always lived within the limits of "the great American pie belt."

The local newspaper which comes to these people every week, bringing home news from Wisconsin, is a welcome guest, though they expect to spend the remainder of their days in the cozy white cottage under the cliffs of Österö.

A fine drive, built high up on the wall of the cliff skirting the fjord, led us to Tvedestrand. This romantic town is situated in a rugged gulch, its houses piled up the hillside wherever the rock presents sufficient level surface. This much and no more, we had time to observe, for the little

"Quick" (twin sister of the "Smart") whistled impatiently for us to get aboard, barely leaving us time to pay our driver. Then, true to her name, she carried us quickly out to meet a coast steamer. On the way we passed many a verdant paradise on the little islets or half hidden between the bluffs.



A NORWEGIAN ROADWAY.

Before noon we reached Arendal—a maritime city, and one of the finest on the southern coast. The ships that line its extensive wharves hail from every land. Our stay here was short, for, learning that the friend



whom we had come to visit resided at some distance from the city, again we must board a small yacht.

Many a time since have I in fancy taken that ride, and always with amusement. It was all on such a small scale that it seemed like child's play. A miniature steamboat, sunny weather, calm water, little doll islands—ever so many, with small straits between them just wide enough to admit our boat which gave a shrill little whistle as it neared the tiny wooden piers. The modest fare of ten cents was collected from us; and, after waiting till the bags of flour which made up the light cargo had been removed from the deck, a gang-plank—five feet long and eighteen inches wide—was laid down for us. Altogether, we might have fancied ourselves in the land of the Liliputians, had it not been for the two stalwart, broad-shouldered Norsemen that composed the crew.

On the landing stood Anna, her blue eyes tear-dimmed, her lips trembling. She was thinking of others, so dear to her, on the far side of that relentless sea—others whose hands we had clasped and whose messages we bore.

Her husband is a sailor who makes voyages to Australia, and only rarely comes home to gladden the patient watcher in the old cottage at Strengereid. The house stands on a knoll, with the fjord on one side and a fresh water lake on the other. From the shady green turf rise many domes of rock covered with heather, now in full bloom. I spent hours among these, gathering the fragrant, purple bells to carry home to my friends. A few peaceful days, and Anna accompanied us to Arendal, where she purchased several gifts, among them a generous piece of *clove-cheese*, to send to her friends in America

We then boarded the good steamer *Prospero*, which was to carry us to England. A great crowd gathered on the quay, and there were the usual scenes of parting—last words, handclasps, tears, for some were leaving their homeland, perhaps never to return. Who has not witnessed this oft-repeated drama that never loses its pathos!

One plump little girl whose father was going to America, wailed aloud her sorrow and refused to be comforted. A young man who had been indulging too freely in the parting toasts, reeled on the deck as he lustily shouted his good-bye.

A tall gentleman with a dignified mien was reminding a group of departing friends of the great reunion to which they must all look forward, urging them to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

As our boat swung off cheers rose and hundreds of handkerchiefs waved adieu. The crowd grew indistinct in



ANNA.

the distance; but, apart from the rest, I saw the form of Anna with her fluttering signal—the last of the many tokens

of kindness and good will shown to us on these hospitable shores. Westward along the rugged coast, past Lindesnes, and the last rocky spur was lost to sight in the twilight.

Fare-thee-well, Norway, highly-favored and fair amid the fair lands of earth! There would be sadness in the thought of never seeing you again, were it not for this higher thought:

Your proud mountain walls shall melt away; but the God whose fingers formed your sublime landscapes, has prepared for own, glories so much higher that "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard." So I look back to you with pleasure only, not regret, grateful for the clearer knowledge which you have given me of the heart of the Infinite. If this passing earth can be so glorious, what must his heaven be!









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